

CHURCHES AND SOCIAL POWER IN EARLY MEDIEVAL EUROPE

STUDIES IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

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CHURCHES AND SOCIAL POWER IN EARLY MEDIEVAL EUROPE

Integrating Archaeological
and Historical Approaches

Edited by

José C. Sánchez-Pardo
and Michael G. Shapland



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INTRODUCTION: CHURCHES AND SOCIAL POWER IN EARLY MEDIEVAL EUROPE

José C. Sánchez-Pardo and Michael G. Shapland*

Churches were one of the principal manifestations of elite practice in the early medieval landscape of Western Europe, together with high-status burials, fortifications, and residences. However, unlike these latter sites, churches were intrinsically open to multiple social interactions. Across early medieval Western Europe, ecclesiastical foundations can be broadly divided into greater churches and monasteries, which were commonly founded by kings and bishops, and smaller, local churches, which were founded in large numbers by aristocratic elites, often in the later centuries of this tumultuous period.¹ As the following chapters demonstrate, this crude generalization has as many exceptions as adherents: monasteries could be ascetic as well as lavish and typically consisted of a number of churches with different functions, from baptistery to hermitage to mausoleum. Local churches could be established by devout peasant communities, founded by kings for mere convenience of private worship, or established by bishops to consecrate an existing ritual place. Even accepting this great variety, churches were one of the few social scenarios com-

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¹ See Wood, *The Proprietary Church*, especially pp. 3–4 and 437–38 for the best general introduction to this complex topic across Western Europe.

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mon across early medieval Western Europe which were shared by virtually all social strata and which had a set of commonly understood rules and structures. The merest peasant might worship in a great royal monastery, just as the most powerful aristocrat might embed with a church their piety in the local landscape, and both would understand the common grammar of space, architecture, and behaviour of either of these places, almost regardless of their size or their location in Europe. This made churches, no less than warfare and burial, exceptionally favourable places for the negotiation and display of social power, as well as an invaluable marker for comparing different patterns of power across the tremendous social and political variety of these centuries of European history.

Despite this importance, it is striking how little attention has been paid so far to early medieval churches from comparative historical and archaeological perspectives across the continent. This gap is even more surprising in view of the significant amount of archaeological information revealed on early churches in many areas over the last twenty years, particularly in southern Europe, which needs to be discussed in the light of other European experiences. There is also a tendency towards firm separation between chronological periods across the continent in this study area — with a typical break around the year AD 1000 — which impedes comparison and social interpretation of the material through time.

This book aims to overcome these limitations by exploring the dynamics of power behind the establishment of churches across Western Europe in the early and central Middle Ages from an interdisciplinary and comparative perspective. It is the main result of a conference sponsored and hosted by the University College London Institute of Archaeology in London during November 2010, expanded with additional chapters to widen geographical coverage. The present volume brings together sixteen case studies from ten European countries, with the emphasis on combining recent archaeological findings with new interpretations of written evidence. The aim is to provide new insights into the strategies by which churches were founded and bound to the service of social power in early medieval Western Europe.

The Study of Early Medieval Churches in Europe

In recent years the old debate about social transformations in Europe between the end of the Roman Empire and the consolidation of feudalism has grown in intensity.² This revival has been characterized by the contributions of medi-

² Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*; Brogiolo and Chavarría Arnau, *Aristocrazie e campagne*; Davis and McCormick, *The Long Morning of Medieval Europe*.

eval archaeology across many countries during recent decades which have challenged traditional explanations concerning the apparent weakness of social organization prior to the so-called 'revolution of the year 1000'.³ The existence of richer and more complex realities during the early Middle Ages is now accepted, centring on the existence of long-distance exchange networks, well-established settlements, intensive land use, complex political frameworks, and so on. Overall, these centuries were clearly an important period of transformation across Europe, characterized by a strong regional variety. Within this context, a crucial historiographical issue has been the origin, evolution, and purpose of early medieval aristocracies, and the social, economic, and political underpinnings of their status.⁴

Over recent decades the extent to which early medieval churches were related to these social elites, both at a local and a regional scale, has been a fruitful area of research. However, many of the broad studies on this topic have been confined to documentary evidence, exemplified by Susan Wood's seminal *The Proprietary Church in the Medieval West* (2006).⁵ Other important documentary approaches are the work of Peter Brown on the Christian kingdoms of early medieval Europe,⁶ Michel Lauwers's study of the developing concentration of churches, cemeteries, and settlements in Western Europe as a reflection of increasing 'seigneurialization' in the last centuries of the early Middle Ages,⁷ and Thacker and Sharpe's edited volume on the development of local saints' cults in different areas of Europe.⁸ Although it does not only deal with churches, the important volume *Topographies of Power in the Early Middle Ages* contains a number of excellent textual approaches to the relation between social elites and religious spaces in early medieval Europe.⁹ At the purely national level there is a comparative abundance of works on churches and social elites from a documentary perspective, in France,¹⁰

³ Fossier, *Enfance de l'Europe*.

⁴ See, among others, Innes, *State and Society*; Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*; De Jong, Theuws, and Van Rhijn, *Topographies of Power*.

⁵ Wood, *The Proprietary Church*.

⁶ Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*.

⁷ Lauwers, *Naissance du cimetière*.

⁸ Thacker and Sharpe, *Local Saints and Local Churches*.

⁹ Díaz Martínez, 'Monasteries in a Peripheral Area'; Effros, 'Monuments and Memory'; Härke, 'Cemeteries as Places of Power'; Innes, 'People, Places and Power'; Le Jan, 'Convents, Violence and Competition for Power'; Smith, '*Aedificatio Sancti Loci*'.

¹⁰ Lebecq, 'The Role of the Monasteries'; Le Jan, 'Convents, Violence and Competition for Power'; Wood, 'Constructing Cults'; Smith, '*Aedificatio Sancti Loci*'.

Italy,¹¹ Germany,¹² Portugal,¹³ Spain,¹⁴ and England,¹⁵ which display important differences related to differing national historiographical traditions.

Archaeology provides a valuable approach to the study of early medieval churches, complementing textual sources and elucidating periods, areas, and topics that would otherwise remain invisible. Many early churches survive, and others continue to be excavated as part of a long tradition of the archaeological study of Christian buildings. Work across much of Europe in recent years has advanced our understanding of these sites beyond traditional art-historical approaches into a deeper understanding of their active role as socially significant material culture.¹⁶

In France, the pioneering volumes edited by Michel Fixot and Elizabeth Zadora-Rio in 1989 and 1994 dealt with the placement of the medieval churches in the landscape through case studies of different regions.¹⁷ Zadora-Rio established a comparative approach to the development of churchyards and parish territories in France and England between the seventh and twelfth centuries,¹⁸ and Christine Delaplace's edited 2005 volume on the archaeology of early medieval churches in southern Gaul is an important milestone.¹⁹ For central and northern France particularly, an increasing number of archaeological studies of early medieval churches have seen the light in the last twenty years.²⁰

¹¹ Azzara, 'Ecclesiastical Institutions'; La Rocca, 'Le élites, chiese e sepolture familiari'; Costambeys, *Power and Patronage*; Settia, 'Pievi e cappelle nella dinamica'; Violante, 'Le strutture organizzative della cura d'anime'.

¹² Innes, *State and Society*; Prinz, *Frühes Mönchtum im Frankenreich*.

¹³ Mattoso, *História de Portugal*; David, *Études historiques*; Almeida, *Paróquias suevas*.

¹⁴ Loring García, 'Nobleza e iglesias propias'; Peña Bocos, 'Ecclesia y Monasterium'; Díaz Martínez, *Formas económicas y sociales*; García de Cortázar, 'La organización socioeclesiológica'.

¹⁵ See, for example, the debate over the role of minsters in Anglo-Saxon England: Blair, 'Ecclesiastical Organisation and Pastoral Care'; Cambridge and Rollason, 'The Pastoral Organisation of the Anglo-Saxon Church'; Palliser, 'The "Minster Hypothesis": A Case Study'.

¹⁶ The following is not intended as an exhaustive revision of the scholarship on the archaeology of early medieval churches in each country. More detailed bibliographies can be found throughout the different chapters of this volume.

¹⁷ Fixot and Zadora-Rio, *L'église, le terroir*; Fixot and Zadora-Rio, *L'environnement des églises*.

¹⁸ Zadora-Rio, 'The Making of Churchyards'; Zadora-Rio, 'L'historiographie des paroisses'.

¹⁹ Delaplace, *Aux origines de la paroisse rurale*.

²⁰ Boissavit-Camus and Bourgeois, 'Les premières paroisses'; Guigon, 'The Archaeology of the So-Called "Celtic Church"'; Giot, Guigon, and Merdrignac, *The British Settlement of Brittany*; Giganon, 'Édifice religieux'.

Germany has a long and well-established scholarship on medieval churches and cemeteries,²¹ and important work has been done regarding early medieval ecclesiastical architecture.²² Neighbouring Switzerland and the Alpine regions have also benefitted from important recent work.²³

In Italy there is a long tradition of church archaeology. Advances based on stratigraphical excavation in recent decades have led to new national and regional syntheses of baptismal churches,²⁴ the Christianization of late antique towns,²⁵ the archaeology of late antique north Italian churches,²⁶ and a corresponding volume for Tuscany.²⁷ Valuable work has also appeared for southern Italy²⁸ and Lazio.²⁹

In the British Isles the discipline of medieval archaeology is well established,³⁰ as is the archaeological study of medieval churches.³¹ The four nations of England,³² Wales,³³ Scotland,³⁴ and Ireland³⁵ benefit from key syntheses of the subject, which have been recently augmented by numerous regional studies of medieval churches, landscapes, and society, for East Anglia,³⁶ Lincoln-

²¹ Fehring, *The Archaeology of Medieval Germany*, pp. 57–88.

²² Oswald and Jacobsen, *Vorromanische Kirchenbauten*; Jacobsen, *Der Klosterplan von St. Gallen*.

²³ Bonnet, 'Les églises rurales'; Bierbrauer, 'The Cross Goes North: From Late Antiquity to Merovingian Times'; Nothdurfter, 'Chiese del VII e VIII'; Sennhauser, 'Problemi riguardanti'.

²⁴ Gandolfi, *L'edificio battesimale in Italia*.

²⁵ Cantino Wataghin, 'Christian Topography'.

²⁶ Brogiolo, *Le Chiese e insediamenti nelle campagne*; Brogiolo, *Le Chiese rurali tra VII e VIII secolo*; Brogiolo, 'Oratori funerari'.

²⁷ Campana and others, *Chiese e insediamenti*.

²⁸ Volpe, 'Il ruolo dei vescovi'; Volpe, 'Vescovi rurali e chiese'.

²⁹ Fiocchi Nicolai, *Strutture funerarie ed edifici di culto*; Fiocchi Nicolai, 'Il ruolo dell'evergetismo'; Brandenburg, *Ancient Churches*; Christie, 'Three South Etrurian Churches'.

³⁰ Gerrard, 'Tribes and Territories'.

³¹ Taylor and Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*; Rodwell, *The Archaeology of Churches*; Cramp, 'Milestones in Early Medieval Archaeology', pp. 54–55.

³² Morris, *Churches in the Landscape*; Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*.

³³ Ludlow, 'Identifying Early Medieval Ecclesiastical Sites'; Petts, *The Early Medieval Church*; Petts and Turner, 'Early Medieval Church Groups'.

³⁴ Fawcett, *Scottish Medieval Churches*; Cruden, *Scottish Medieval Churches*.

³⁵ O'Keeffe, *Romanesque Ireland*; Ó Carragáin, *Churches in Early Medieval Ireland*; Swan, 'Ecclesiastical Settlement in Ireland'; Davies, 'Economic Change in Early Medieval Ireland'.

³⁶ Pestell, *Landscape of Monastic Foundation*; Hogget, 'The Early Christian Landscape of East Anglia'.

shire,³⁷ Yorkshire,³⁸ St Andrews,³⁹ Strathclyde,⁴⁰ and south-west England,⁴¹ amongst others, strengthened by a strong tradition of combining archaeological and documentary evidence.⁴²

In Spain, studies on the archaeology of early medieval churches have traditionally been based on 'monumentalist' perspectives linked to old conceptions of art history. However, debate on the assumed chronology of the 'Visigothic' churches over the past twenty years has led to new archaeological approaches and reflection on existing methodologies.⁴³ Important examples of these new research directions include the archaeology of early medieval churches in the Basque Country,⁴⁴ the first synthesis of the archaeology of late antique churches,⁴⁵ and interdisciplinary approaches to early medieval elites in Spanish churches and monasteries.⁴⁶ These disciplinary advances are also apparent in neighbouring Portugal.⁴⁷

These brief summaries indicate that major advances have been made in the archaeology of early medieval churches across different Western European traditions of scholarship. However, three main factors have impeded church archaeology from becoming consolidated as a truly pan-European approach to

³⁷ Stocker and Everson, *Summoning St Michael*.

³⁸ Hall and Whyman, 'Settlement and Monasticism at Ripon'.

³⁹ Higgitt, *Medieval Art and Architecture*.

⁴⁰ Driscoll, 'Church Archaeology in Glasgow'.

⁴¹ Hall, 'Identifying British Christian Sites'; Turner, *Making a Christian Landscape*; Turner, 'The Christian Landscape'.

⁴² The most recent exemplar of this is Gittos, *Liturgy, Architecture*.

⁴³ Arbeiter, 'Alegato por la riqueza'; Caballero Zoreda, 'La arquitectura denominada'; Caballero Zoreda, 'Un canal de transmisión'; Caballero Zoreda and Utrero Agudo, 'Una aproximación a las técnicas'; Chavarría Arnau, 'Churches and Aristocracies in Seventh-Century Spain'; Collins, 'Conclusions'; Utrero Agudo, 'Late-Antique and Early Medieval Hispanic Churches'; Utrero Agudo, *Iglesias tardoantiguas*.

⁴⁴ Quirós Castillo, 'Las iglesias altomedievales'; García Camino, *Arqueología y poblamiento en Bizkaia*; Sánchez Zufiaurre, *Técnicas constructivas medievales*.

⁴⁵ Ripoll and Velázquez, 'Orígen y desarrollo de las *parrochiae*'; Martínez Tejera, 'Arquitectura cristiana'.

⁴⁶ Lopez Quiroga, Martínez Tejera, and Morín de Pablos, *Monasteria et territoria*.

⁴⁷ Ferreira de Almeida, *Arte da alta idade média*; Ferreira de Almeida, *O Românico*; Justino Maciel, *Antiguidade tardia*; Almeida Fernandes, 'Esplendor ou declínio?'; Fontes, 'O Norte de Portugal'; Fontes, 'Braga e o norte'.

the study of early medieval social processes, complementing and challenging the limitations of the purely documentary approach.⁴⁸

Firstly, archaeological research on early medieval churches has so far remained within the confines of disparate national traditions, in contrast to other topics such as settlement and burial. There are few comparative or wider approaches on the archaeology of European early medieval churches; exceptions include an important ongoing project on the architecture of the early medieval churches in Europe,⁴⁹ an edited volume comparing the ecclesiastical topography of France with neighbouring areas,⁵⁰ another considering the surge in European church-building around the first millennium,⁵¹ a study of the archaeology and history of the early baptismal churches and ecclesiastical organization of Italy and surrounding countries,⁵² works dealing with the first Christian buildings in south-west Europe,⁵³ a synthesis on the church archaeology of the Mediterranean,⁵⁴ and a comparative approach to the archaeology of early medieval Celtic churches.⁵⁵ However, many of these works focus on specific regions with a notable separation between Mediterranean and Northern/Atlantic Europe.

Secondly, few current works have moved from the archaeological data to encompass wider social interpretations. The exceptions again tend to be regionally fragmented, such as a recent synthesis on the evolution of early medieval churches in the social contexts of Italy, Spain, and southern France,⁵⁶ or an important collection of essays on the complex processes of Christian conversion during the early and central Middle Ages across Central, Northern, and Eastern Europe.⁵⁷ There have also been some global reflections on the 'archaeology of Christianity'.⁵⁸

⁴⁸ Exemplified by Wood, *The Proprietary Church*.

⁴⁹ The CARE project, led by Gian Pietro Brogiolo and Miljenko Jurković. A presentation of the project can be found in Brogiolo and Jurković, 'Corpus Architecturae'.

⁵⁰ Fixot and Zadora-Rio, *L'environnement des églises*.

⁵¹ Hiscock, *The White Mantle of Churches*.

⁵² Pergola, *Alle origine della parrocchia*.

⁵³ Bowes, 'Christianization' and the Rural Home'; Bowes, 'Early Christian Archaeology'.

⁵⁴ Chavarriá Arnau, *Archeologia delle chiese*.

⁵⁵ Edwards, *The Archaeology of the Early Medieval Celtic Churches*; Edwards and Lane, *The Early Church in Wales*.

⁵⁶ Brogiolo and Chavarriá Arnau, *Aristocrazie e campagne*; Brogiolo and Chavarriá Arnau, 'Chiese, territorio'; Chavarriá Arnau, *Archeologia delle chiese*.

⁵⁷ Carver, *The Cross Goes North*.

⁵⁸ Lane, 'The Archaeology of Christianity'; Pluskowski and Patrick, 'How Do You Pray to God?'

Thirdly, most existing studies are underpinned by specifically historical perspectives on churches and society. This means that so far no work has addressed the problem of how to study the relationships between social elites and early medieval churches from an archaeological perspective. Before discussing the former two problems in terms of the present volume, the third will be dealt with here.

Social Power in Early Medieval Churches: An Archaeological Perspective

Social theory offers a useful framework to approach the problem of how to draw broad generalizations from disparate historical contexts and academic traditions.⁵⁹ The involvement of social elites in early medieval churches is ultimately a question of how social power was manifested in particular places and buildings. Recent decades of research in sociology have considered social power as the ability to influence behaviour.⁶⁰ One of the most important works on power from a historical perspective has been Michael Mann's study of the development of social power from prehistory to the eighteenth century, in which four main sources of power are identified: political, military, ideological, and economic.⁶¹

Political power is the legitimized control over society, which in complex states like early medieval Europe was exercised through the legal and administrative scaffolding of government, as well as through less formal kin-groups and personal relationships. Military power can be a straightforward coercive force, or it can involve the implication or threat of force, often manifested in material culture. The ability to protect others from attack can also legitimate authority. Economic power encompasses control over production, resources, and exchange networks. This form of power tends to lead to control over land tenure and strong demarcation of the agrarian landscape in rural economies such as early medieval Europe. Finally, ideological power legitimizes ruling elites. It is often underpinned by organized religion and the public performance of rituals and manifested in material culture, particularly buildings. The embodiment

⁵⁹ Gilchrist, 'Medieval Archaeology and Theory' provides an excellent introduction to the use of theory by medieval archaeologists.

⁶⁰ French and Raven, 'The Bases of Social Power'; Raven, 'Influence, Power'; Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*; Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*.

⁶¹ Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*.

of age and history in this material culture may serve to further legitimize the ideological construct it represents, by implying permanence and inviolability.

These four sources are essentially inseparable but are useful as an interpretative model to frame comparative discussion. Based on Michael Mann's work, Timothy Earle has developed specific approaches for archaeological and anthropological contexts, showing the diversity of ways that social elites employ the sources of social power, with special emphasis on comparing the political economies of different geographical and temporal contexts.⁶² Nevertheless, the question of what a church meant in terms of social power in the early Middle Ages is important and scarcely explored. This can be approached from two complementary perspectives: churches as sacred places in themselves, and as focal places in wider landscapes of social power.

Churches as Sacred Places of Social Power

Churches embodied social power as *sacred places* in early medieval Europe.⁶³ There is a long history of the comparative study of sacred places, which can be characterized by their permanence and their sharp conceptual and often physical distinction from the profane.⁶⁴ Sacred places are not chosen: *here*, in *this* place, has the sacred ever been manifest, meaning that those who control a sacred place have a perpetual and inexhaustible share in its power. In a Christian context, sacred places could be revealed by God in a miracle or made through association with a saint by a secular or ecclesiastical elite. Once established, a holy place, usually manifested by a church, permitted at least the illusion of common ground and shared experience between people of very different social and political classes.⁶⁵

As such, churches were a considerable source of ideological power, legitimizing social inequality and the use of other forms of power. As an organized monotheistic religion under an omniscient and all-powerful deity, Christianity

⁶² Earle, *How Chiefs Come to Power*.

⁶³ From this perspective, churches share aspects of sacred places across other historical and geographical contexts, such as the use of offerings and the codification of behaviour. See Carmichael, Hubert, and Reeves, 'Introduction'.

⁶⁴ Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, esp. pp. 368–69.

⁶⁵ Gittos, *Liturgy, Architecture*, esp. pp. 19–54, provides an excellent recent discussion of early medieval Christian sacred places. For a case study of church foundations in medieval southern France, see Remensnyder, *Remembering Kings Past*.

justified authoritarian rule, and its message of submission enhanced social control.⁶⁶ From its adoption by the fourth-century Roman emperors, Christianity has always expanded with the support or coercion of governments and social elites.⁶⁷ In this sense, Christian religion became the dominant source of ideological power in medieval Europe.

This said, ideology is most effective when given a material form which can be codified and controlled, the more so if the physical form is one unavailable to the population at large, thus conveying exclusivity and high status.⁶⁸ Under Constantine I (306–37) the architecture, dress, imagery, ceremony, and liturgy of the Church began to assume imperial forms.⁶⁹ The foremost material expression of medieval Christianity was of course its churches, whose architecture, spatial organization, iconography, atmosphere, and regulation of conduct articulated aspects of the dominant ideology.⁷⁰ At the same time there were lay elements inside churches, since no clear frontiers between sacred and profane existed within.⁷¹ Most early medieval churches were small buildings, concentrated spaces where few people could stand. But as centres of religious identity for communities, they acted like an optical lens, focusing attention on the objects, rituals, and actions therein.⁷²

The concept of sacred places and buildings is not intrinsic to Christianity,⁷³ but rose in parallel with its assumption by the Roman Empire in the fourth century.⁷⁴ From this time there was a need to draw upon the old persecuted Church in the new Constantinian era, as martyr-cults were promoted and the sacred places of biblical events were developed, localizing the past in the present.⁷⁵

⁶⁶ Higham, *The Convert Kings*, pp. 25–34; Cleve, ‘The Triumph of Christianity’; Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, p. 337; Raven, ‘Influence, Power’, esp. p. 164. For a wider anthropological context, see Aldenferfer, ‘Gimme that Old Time Religion’.

⁶⁷ Cleve, ‘The Triumph of Christianity’, p. 534.

⁶⁸ De Marrais, Castillo, and Earle, ‘Ideology, Materialization’, pp. 15–17.

⁶⁹ Summarized in Doig, *Liturgy and Architecture*, pp. 21–52.

⁷⁰ Raven, ‘Influence, Power’, pp. 176–82.

⁷¹ Hamilton and Spicer, ‘Defining the Holy’, p. 3; Gittos, *Liturgy, Architecture*.

⁷² Hamilton and Spicer, ‘Defining the Holy’, p. 4.

⁷³ See Anne Nissen’s paper in this volume on the differences and transformations between non-Christian and Christian early medieval sacred places, and the distinction between sacrality, holiness, and religion.

⁷⁴ Markus, ‘How on Earth’.

⁷⁵ Markus, ‘How on Earth’, p. 271.

The use and reuse of the material remains of the past therefore became particularly important for the Church,⁷⁶ which developed into the symbolic use of Roman *spolia* in early medieval churches,⁷⁷ the foundation of churches over ancient ruins,⁷⁸ and the ‘rewriting’ of sacred landscapes.⁷⁹ Whilst in the more Romanized areas of Europe such as the Mediterranean, churches were invariably associated with the Roman past, northern regions also drew upon prehistoric monuments such as barrows or megaliths.⁸⁰ In both cases — as shown by Richard Bradley — the juxtaposition of older monuments with early medieval churches does not indicate long ritual continuity, as is often believed, but rather a resource employed by medieval elites to channel the power of the past to legitimize their position.⁸¹ This was especially important in times of change and instability, as the exploitation of ancient sites and materials conveyed the authority and security of the past.⁸² Given its ideological potency, the reuse of the past was closely controlled by elites,⁸³ for example by achieving a monopoly over the Roman building materials of their locality.⁸⁴

Churches as Places of Power in the Landscape

Churches cannot be interpreted as an aspect of social power without considering their spatial context, as *places of power* in the landscape. The definition of these places goes here beyond geographical accessibility and can be linked with Giddens’s concept of ‘locales’⁸⁵ and Geertz’s ‘centres.’⁸⁶ In any society there are

⁷⁶ Effros, ‘Monuments and Memory’; Markus, ‘How on Earth’.

⁷⁷ Eaton, *Plundering the Past*; Hansen, *The Eloquence of Appropriation*.

⁷⁸ Bell, *The Religious Reuse*; Effros, ‘Monuments and Memory’.

⁷⁹ Parcero Oubifia, Criado Boado, and Santos Estevez, ‘Rewriting Landscape’.

⁸⁰ Williams, ‘Monuments and the Past’; Bradley, *Altering the Earth*, pp. 114–29. See now Semple, *Perceptions of the Prehistoric*.

⁸¹ Bradley, ‘Time Regained’; Bradley, *Altering the Earth*, pp. 114–29.

⁸² Bradley, *Altering the Earth*, p. 115.

⁸³ Effros, ‘Monuments and Memory’, p. 118.

⁸⁴ Chavarria Arnau, *Archeologia delle chiese*, p. 108; Effros, ‘Monuments and Memory’, p. 98.

⁸⁵ ‘Locales refer to the use of space to provide the *settings* of interaction, the settings of interaction in turn being essential to specifying its *contextuality*’: Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, p. 118.

⁸⁶ ‘Such centres, which have nothing to do with geometry and little with geography, are essentially concentrated *loci* of serious acts; they consist in the point or points in a society where its leading ideas come together with its leading institutions to create an arena in which

certain key places where status is negotiated, authority is legitimated, and order imposed. Powerful individuals will always be closely associated with these places, and usually restrict access to them. The importance of these places will often be manifested through material culture, which helps articulate the social practice that occurs there. This material culture will in turn become imbued with some of the power and authority of the place that it is helping to define. The restriction of access to these places of power and the ability to shape their material culture — such as churches — will be potent in the exercise of power and control over the society that they help to structure.⁸⁷

Places of power need to be understood in relation to their landscape contexts.⁸⁸ The creation of 'aristocratic spaces' was an important aspect of the power of medieval elites, who sought to 'fill' the everyday landscape with their presence in order to reinforce their dominance.⁸⁹ The forms of social power exercised over these landscapes and their places of power by different and often competing elites varied deeply and needs to be approached through comparative analysis.⁹⁰ From this perspective, churches are comparable to other early medieval places of power, such as fortifications and aristocratic residences. Churches were centres of religious practice, but were also central to many aspects of daily life — festive gatherings, commercial transactions, judicial ordeals, and the swearing of oaths⁹¹ — making them spaces of interaction across social strata. As such, churches were particularly valuable foci for the representation and negotiation of power. Cemeteries can be interpreted in a similar fashion,⁹² and their increasing integration with churches by the end of the early Middle Ages was an important step in controlling the combined power of these two central Christian places of social and symbolic power.⁹³

Following the classification summarized above, churches could be sources of, and manifest, aspects of ideological, political, economic, and even military power. They legitimized the social position and authority of their builders, they

the events that most vitally affect its members' lives take place': Geertz, 'Centres, Kings and Charisma', p. 151.

⁸⁷ Tilley, *A Phenomenology*, pp. 26–27.

⁸⁸ Tilley, *A Phenomenology*; Reynolds, 'Meaningful Landscapes'.

⁸⁹ Hansson, 'The Medieval Aristocracy'.

⁹⁰ Escalona Monge, 'The Early Middle Ages', pp. 16–22.

⁹¹ Davies, *The Secular Use*.

⁹² Härke, 'Cemeteries as Places of Power', pp. 23–26.

⁹³ Zadora-Rio, 'The Making of Churchyards'; Lauwers, *Naissance du cimetière*.

structured gatherings of influential people and kin, and they frequently controlled estates, tithes, and other economic resources, whilst their buildings were physical demonstrations of the ability to control and deploy economic surplus. There is even widespread European evidence for churches and monasteries as useful fortifications, or at least that they conveyed the image of martial power.⁹⁴

Contrary to the late medieval period, the economic and political power invested in early medieval churches was relatively decentralized and negotiable at a local level. The private foundation, control, and ownership of churches by communities and aristocracies was extensive, despite episcopal efforts to the contrary.⁹⁵ The picture is commonly one of a variety of possible founders, cofounders, changing owners, and custodians of early medieval churches, encompassing peasant communities, local lords, mercantile associations, bishops, and kings, many of whom may hold different overlapping levels of economic investment in a region's churches. Churches are therefore valuable evidence for the strategies of early medieval founders at the centre of a range of local and supralocal social relationships.⁹⁶ As prominent and elaborate material culture, church buildings frequently lay at the places of power in a given locality and provide a good basis to analyse topographies of power in the early medieval landscape.

However, we must prevent simplistic visions of churches as successful generators of social power. They were rather foci within changing strategies to claim or exercise power in distinctive ways with uncertain and unpredictable outcomes, and we need to take into consideration a range of factors before approaching how social power was embodied in a particular church. The scenario was different depending on the owners or social actors linked to each church and was related to an increasingly blurred distinction towards the latter part of our period between private churches and those providing wider pastoral care. Different lordship over churches could encompass kings, regional lords, local elites, and other churches, and family monasteries could remain under the auspices of their founder families or be appropriated by external powers. There could also be a great complexity of possible economic interests over a church,

⁹⁴ Bonde, 'Castle and Church Building'; Harrison, *Castles of God*.

⁹⁵ Wood, *The Proprietary Church*, pp. 66–92.

⁹⁶ See the interesting discussions on how churches and monasteries acted as platforms for articulation between regional and central elites in the middle Rhine valley (Germany) and the Sabina region (Italy): Innes, *State and Society*, especially pp. 16–50; Costambeys, *Power and Patronage*.



Map 1.1. Location of the areas and main sites across Europe discussed in this volume.
 Map by José Carlos Sánchez-Pardo using Demis WMS World Map.

its tithes, its rents, and the productive lands it may directly control.⁹⁷ In this volume, these issues are particularly carefully explored by Tomás Ó Carragáin in his chapter on the connection between status, geography, and the diversity of patronage in the Irish kingdom of Fir Maige, and by Gian Pietro Brogiolo's discussion of the ideological factors governing church building at the end of the Lombard kingdom.

⁹⁷ Wood, *The Proprietary Church*, pp. 66–85, 109–10, 182.

The Perspective for the Volume

In this book we refer to 'church', from a broad perspective, to mean any kind of ecclesiastical foundation, including monasteries and chapels. Several dimensions of social power are argued above to have converged on early medieval churches, which can be understood as material expressions of these social strategies. This anthropological approach enables comparisons to be made across the Western European scope of this volume.

Sixteen chapters about social power and churches are presented here covering ten European countries: England, Italy, France, Spain, Germany, Ireland, Iceland, Portugal, Sweden, and Denmark. Each chapter considers the relationship between social power and the foundation and/or management of churches in different areas of early medieval Western Europe. The common perspective uniting these varied case studies is threefold, as follows.

Firstly, each chapter is written mindful of the volume's concern with trends and processes rather than discrete historiographies, so the intention is to offer a series of clear studies that allow comparison of the ways in which social power was embodied in churches in different parts of early medieval Europe. Secondly, although most of the chapters are mainly based on archaeological evidence, this volume is characterized by an interdisciplinary approach. Archaeology offers an ever-expanding body of information, much of which has not previously been presented in English, which will here be combined with textual evidence and established documentary approaches in order to properly understand their role in early medieval society. Thirdly, as discussed above, it is crucial to study churches in their landscape contexts.⁹⁸ Much of their social meaning would have been integral to their interconnectedness with other places of power such as settlements, fortifications, roads, and cemeteries.

Early Medieval Churches and Social Power: Some Principal Trends

The chapters contained in this volume explore early medieval churches and social power from different research traditions. This is variously a result of divergent national perspectives, the distinction between late antique and early medieval society, and the different approaches of archaeology and documentary history.⁹⁹ Whilst this diversity of early medieval historiography is an acci-

⁹⁸ Morris, *Churches in the Landscape*, is a pioneer of this approach.

⁹⁹ On this, see Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, pp. 1–6.

dent of academic practices, it is also a reflection of the genuine heterogeneity that so characterizes the early Middle Ages. Despite the ubiquity of churches in Western Europe during this period, individual examples will be as eloquent about their region or locality as they will be reflections of European churches as a whole. To take something as fundamental as materiality, early medieval churches in Ireland and post-Roman Britain were characterized by their timber construction,¹⁰⁰ Anglo-Saxon churches invariably used *spolia* until the tenth or eleventh centuries,¹⁰¹ whilst churches in Italy and southern France were also made of brick, marble, and quarried stone,¹⁰² and different techniques were utilized again in Spain.¹⁰³ Nevertheless, despite this characteristic diversity, several trends relating to early medieval churches and social power are evident throughout this volume, which is divided into four main parts accordingly.

Part I: Churches as Channels for Power Relations

The first group of chapters primarily concerns churches as channels for power relations in different early medieval European contexts, particularly between local and regional elites. Juan Antonio Quirós and Igor Santos combine archaeological and documentary sources to analyse the use of churches as instruments of power and social ambition in early medieval Álava (northern Spain). Alexandra Chavarría explores the founders and landscape contexts of the early medieval churches of the Garda region of Italy, and Tomás Ó Carragáin the diversity and foundation strategies of the churches of the early medieval Irish kingdom of Fir Maige, from the major churches of the greater aristocracy to the small churches of local lords. Finally, Roberto Farinelli draws upon the rich Lucca archive to explore the relationship between episcopal and proprietary churches in eighth-century Tuscany.

Several closely interrelated themes recur throughout these chapters. Churches often reflect the contention between bishops and lay elites, as shown by Chavarría and Farinelli, indicative of the dichotomy between private and episcopal churches which is evident across early medieval Europe. In Italy and Spain, and to a lesser extent in France, bishops had a stronger engagement in social and spatial organization than they had in England. There was blurring in

¹⁰⁰ Ó Carragáin, *Churches in Early Medieval Ireland*, p. 19.

¹⁰¹ Shapland, 'The Cuckoo and the Magpie'.

¹⁰² Chavarría Arnau, *Archeologia delle chiese*, pp. 106–17.

¹⁰³ Caballero Zoreda and Utrero Agudo, 'Una aproximación a las técnicas'.

the separation between episcopal and private churches due to both the proprietary ambitions of wealthy bishops and the pastoral caring offered by ostensibly private foundations;¹⁰⁴ nevertheless, the division between episcopal and proprietary churches provides an interesting comparative framework across most of Western Europe.

Churches were also instruments for negotiating power relations between minor and major elites, which is visible in the division between major and minor churches, as shown by Ó Carragáin for the kingdom of Fir Maige. This can also be interpreted in terms of the relations between local and regional elites, as highlighted by Quirós and Santos, who also discuss the scarcity of evidence for community-founded churches. Of course the early medieval reality was rather more complex, with a limitless variety of founders, cofounders, changing owners, and 'stakeholders' with social relations and power strategies centred on churches. Donations were particularly important for articulating these relationships, as shown by Quirós and Santos. In general terms, a distinction can be made between foundations in urban contexts — such as Braga, Brescia, Lucca, and Aachen — which tended to be associated with royalty and the episcopacy, and rural foundations, which can be associated with a greater role for local elites and their greater autonomy.

Part II: Churches and the Transition of Power

Certain churches were crucial to political reorganization and social acculturation after military conquests and changes of rulers. Aleksandra McClain's chapter centres on local churches and funerary monuments in North Yorkshire (northern England) between the tenth and twelfth centuries in order to understand changes brought about by the Norman Conquest of 1066. José Carlos Sánchez-Pardo explores the role of churches in Galicia (northern Spain) during its political integration into the expanding Asturian Kingdom during the eighth and ninth centuries. Christofer Zwanzig compares the ninth- and tenth-century accounts of the Mozarabic restoration of the monastery of Samos (northern Spain) and the foundation of the monastery of Heidenheim (southern Germany), both of which took place around the mid-eighth century in contexts of political transitions and social acculturation. Finally, David Petts explores the role of churches in north-western Normandy before, during, and after the Viking and Norman conquests.

¹⁰⁴ Wood, *The Proprietary Church*, pp. 66–92.

As seen throughout these chapters, the impact of new rulers influenced the foundation of churches, which were used both to secure new political connections at the local scale and to legitimate the new political order more widely. In some cases, the intention was to create new places of power associated with the new regime in a recently conquered territory.¹⁰⁵ A particularly pertinent aspect of this is the creation of church foundation myths and memories, for example the similarity in the rhetoric behind the major churches at Aachen (c. AD 800) and Santiago de Compostela (c. AD 825). Both legends recount how the founders — respectively Charlemagne and Bishop Thedomirus — established their churches upon empty sites, despite growing archaeological evidence for continuity of settlement, even pre-existing foundations. This rhetoric of ‘deserted places’ played an important role in legitimizing claims over churches and territories and is visible in the Anglo-Saxon and Mozarabic Christian missions to northern Spain, Germany, and Normandy discussed in this volume.

A related question is the foundation of churches in the aftermath of conquest not by the incomers, but by existing local elites taking advantage of political instability to build up new alliances and power bases, which is discussed in this volume for Normandy (Petts) and Galicia (Sánchez-Pardo). Churches served to place family property in the realm of the sacred, whilst at the same time allowing their founders a material stake in the sacred realm.¹⁰⁶ However, we must be wary of assuming that churches always successfully became long-term places of power, since changes of ownership at a local level were common and both material and textual evidence indicate frequent instabilities and periods of abandonment and ruin. A desire for permanence can be a temporary expediency, even if it results in the foundation of an enduring stone church.

Part III: Churches in Landscapes of Power

The third section is mainly concerned with how churches articulated with the power dynamics at play in their wider landscape contexts. Anne Nissen compares the relationship between political power, cult places, burials, and settlement in northern France and southern Scandinavia over the *longue durée* (fourth to twelfth centuries). Duncan W. Wright explores how minsters may have promoted a new economic and ideological organization of the Anglo-Saxon landscape from the late seventh century onwards, based on regu-

¹⁰⁵ This is a common practice which is well understood in anthropological contexts: see De Marrais, Castillo, and Earle, ‘Ideology, Materialization’; Schreiber, ‘Metaphor, Monumentality’.

¹⁰⁶ Le Jan, ‘Convents, Violence and Competition for Power’.

lar, planned settlements and landholdings. Luís Fontes explores the role of churches in the landscape of the Braga region (northern Portugal) between the fifth and tenth centuries, highlighting the dynamic and flexible function that these buildings acquired during this period. Finally, Christine Delaplace analyses different categories of early medieval church in south-eastern France and their relationship with other places of power in the landscape.

Churches were related to places of power in a variety of ways across the very different landscapes of early medieval Western Europe. A frequent question is their relationship with settlements, which can be deeply informative about how power was channelled across the landscape: Nissen, for example, discusses churches as forces of settlement nucleation, whilst Sánchez-Pardo shows how they served to articulate dispersed settlements in Galicia. The relation between settlements and churches is also mentioned by Farinelli, Quirós and Santos, Ó Carragáin, and Schaub and Kohlberger-Schaub in their respective chapters. Turning to burials, inhumation in the interior of a church was a controlled privilege before the ninth century, indicating that it was related to strategies of social representation.¹⁰⁷ There are also interesting references to the spatial relation between churches and burials for the following centuries in the chapter by McClain. Recent research in south-eastern France and northern Italy reviewed by Delaplace and Chavarría indicates the importance of churches located within late antique fortifications, which is an underexplored topic across much of Europe.

A related question is that of the rhythm of church foundation across the different landscapes of early medieval Europe, which can indicate the scales and intensity of the establishment of territorial frameworks of power. Against the vision of a sudden ‘mushrooming’ of churches around the tenth–twelfth centuries,¹⁰⁸ several chapters of this volume, like Fontes or Chavarría, indicate the high pre-existing density of churches in different areas of Europe. However, it is also clear that the centuries either side of the millennium represented an unparalleled period of new foundations, as discussed here by McClain and Petts. Either way, as can be seen in this volume, it is difficult to identify a unique ‘moment’ of European church expansion, as important differences are evident between ‘central’ areas such as northern Italy, southern Germany, and southern France, and ‘peripheral’ areas such as Ireland and Normandy. More decisive perhaps was the presence or otherwise of Roman occupation, since

¹⁰⁷ Härke, ‘Cemeteries as Places of Power’.

¹⁰⁸ Morris, *Churches in the Landscape*, pp. 141–65; Hiscock, *The White Mantle of Churches*.

Romanized areas appear to have followed similar trends of Christianization and church foundation, despite chronological differences, whilst non-Romanized areas such as Iceland and southern Scandinavia display interesting peculiarities. Many of these earlier differences would be blurred and homogenized with the later creation of parishes, an issue touched on by Petts and McClain.

Part IV: Churches as Centres of Power

The final section explores churches as places where social power is embodied and displayed. Gian Pietro Brogiolo analyses the archaeology and architecture of several northern Italian churches, with particular focus on San Salvatore in Brescia, in order to understand the ideological programme behind their construction. Andreas Schaub and Tanja Kohlberger-Schaub describe the archaeology of Aachen cathedral, which lay at the principal centre of Carolingian power. Michael Shapland analyses the relation between chapels and royal monasteries and the practice of royal power in Anglo-Saxon England. Finally, Guðrún Sveinbjarnardóttir studies the evolution of the Reykholt church in Iceland into a major ecclesiastical centre in the twelfth century, how this is reflected in the archaeological remains, the role played by the economic development of the site in this process, and how the site fits into the general picture of the development of the Church in the country.

In these four chapters, authors are mainly concerned with the question of how churches served as places for the representation of power. In many cases this was achieved by means of their architecture, as shown by Brogiolo in his chapter and in the case of Aachen, whose iconography of power became influential in other parts of Europe, as noted by Shapland. Power was also represented through the choice of a specific dedication or the deliberate reuse of the material remains of the past as mechanisms of legitimation, as demonstrated by Schaub and Kohlberger-Schaub and by Farinelli. Exploring how social power was embodied in the fabric of early medieval churches can tell us how elites wished to portray themselves to their contemporaries and how these messages changed over time.

Many other authors in the volume explore churches as places of power in their respective geographic and chronological contexts. Nissen highlights that it was the place, rather than the sacrality of the remains, which was central to the formation of long-lasting power in northern France,¹⁰⁹ whilst Ó Carragáin

¹⁰⁹ As also noted by Bradley, *Altering the Earth*, pp. 114–29.

shows how some churches were deeply linked to places of power and elite settlements in early medieval Ireland.

Churches were places of economic as well as ideological power. Several described in this volume were heads of productive estates with lands, servants, and other goods. As major economic resources, churches were managed and exchanged by social elites, as explored by Brogiolo and Sveinbjarnardóttir. In this sense churches were also centres of economic surplus, of which they were the physical manifestation and the end result, as Brogiolo reminds in his chapter. A closely related question is the lucrative generation of ecclesiastical tithes and their importance in negotiating political relations. Tithes are a form of surplus extraction, but in the early medieval period they were neither a universal burden nor were they tied to a particular territory. Lords competed for the right to harvest tithes, not merely for profit but as a further aspect of negotiating relative power and status, particularly in rural communities. In some cases, the role of churches as centres of economic power made them central for promoting the economic growth of a given area, such as Wright's study of how churches influenced the physical transformation of the agrarian landscape of parts of England as early as the late seventh century.

Considering churches as centres of power brings us to a final important question, which is the reason behind their foundation across early medieval Europe. From a global perspective, churches often appear to be the result of bottom-up dynamics, expressive of connections and influences between elites of this period. The foundation of churches is also a local process adapted to a specific context, as shown by Sveinbjarnardóttir's account of a bottom-up process of church creation, without the support of royal power that characterizes other northern European areas. This is to some extent paralleled by the foundation of churches in northern Italy or southern France, which from the seventh century onwards began to be promoted by local elites rather than imposed by the episcopacy.

Perspectives for the Future

Churches were important manifestations of social power in early medieval Europe, since they lay at the intersection of the lives of virtually all classes, from royalty to peasantry, and were a common factor uniting elites across similar social scales. The strategies of social elites as manifested in their churches varied in scale, form, and context from one case to other, from the small Irish churches corresponding to the fragmented kingdoms of early medieval Ireland, to the great imperial Carolingian church at Aachen. Nevertheless, churches remained

central to the dynamics of power across early medieval Western Europe, which makes them so valuable for cross-cultural comparisons.

It is clear that the potential of the topic of churches and social power exceeds the limits of this volume, and that many issues need further study in order to move towards broader understanding and comparative perspectives. It would be interesting to study aspects of cult practice, such as liturgy, in terms of social domination,¹¹⁰ the sacred geography of saints and relics, how churches were perceived by different levels of society, or the progressive creation and consolidation of church territories and regions of influence. Further research is also needed into this topic in Eastern Europe and the Byzantine world. Nevertheless, it is hoped that this collection of essays will point the way in these and many other directions.

¹¹⁰ Aldenderfer, 'Gimme that Old Time Religion'.

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Part I

Churches as Channels for Power Relations

FOUNDING AND OWNING CHURCHES IN EARLY MEDIEVAL ÁLAVA (NORTH SPAIN): THE CREATION, TRANSMISSION, AND MONUMENTALIZATION OF MEMORY

Juan Antonio Quirós and Igor Santos*

Introduction

On 1 February 2011 the Court of First Instance Number 1 in Estella (Navarre) passed a sentence against the archbishopric of Pamplona regarding the possession of the hermitage in Pilar del Garísoain, a hamlet of thirty-two inhabitants near Estella. The archbishopric claimed possession of the church on the grounds that ‘in continuous fashion and since time immemorial, it had made use of, possessed, and overseen joyous dedication to the Catholic cult’. On the other hand, the council of Garísoain alleged that the church was the property of the hamlet and its people, ‘given that it is the inhabitants who have taken charge of its administration and maintenance, giving a communal attribute to

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the Catholic cult'. Among the motives given to explain the ruling in favour of the inhabitants, the sentence underlines that the archbishopric 'does not provide any evidence to back up its arguments, by way of payment orders for renovation or conservation work, or other acts consonant with ownership', which, on the other hand, the inhabitants had indeed undertaken. During the proceedings, the inhabitants made recourse to the archive of the hermitage in which, among other things, it is recorded that in 1826, an inhabitant of the hamlet had been awarded 'the government of the aforesaid hermitage and the distribution of alms collected there', as well as the 'custody' of the keys.¹

This contemporary example is very instructive because it shows that both in the past as well as the present, the building, management, maintenance, donation, and endowing of churches in the Basque region was (and is) an act imbued with social and political consequences at various levels, because it has linked local communities with the dominant social structures of a given territory and even affected diocesan vertices. As in the case of Garísoain, many churches were maintained, and on occasion built, by local communities, and disputes regarding their possession have affected many of them — or, to be more precise, disputes have arisen regarding their ownership or government (to which the nineteenth-century document used in the case of Garísoain makes reference). In fact, the neighbours of Garísoain turned to the documents conserved in the archive of the hermitage as an instrument with which to lend legitimacy to their rights to this site of devotion. In the early Middle Ages, this practice had been exercised exclusively by literate groups — overwhelmingly ecclesiastical — who alone were capable of conserving and employing the power of the written word. Thus, for example, in a document recounting the foundation of Valpuesta by Bishop Juan, dated to 804 but redacted and interpolated in the twelfth century, we are reminded that, besides building the church of San Justo and Pastor, this very same appropriated the territory by means of the measure known as the *presura*, and to this end the population that resided there was shown a document that legitimized the occupation of land.² This example dem-

¹ <<http://www.periodistadigital.com/religion/espana/2011/02/01/religion-iglesia-ermita-arzobispado-pamplona-garisoain-titularidad.shtml>> [accessed May 2012]. In reality the Navarrese church obtained, between 1998 and 2007, 1987 properties thanks to Franco-era legislation, excusing its activity on the grounds that no other institution in Spain existed before Spain itself or before the constitution of the Kingdom of Navarre: <<http://www.publico.es/espana/430543/salvados-destapa-los-negocios-inmobiliarios-de-la-iglesia-en-navarra>>. Similarly, see <http://www.plataforma-ekimena.org/?page_id=215> [both accessed May 2012].

² 'adfirmabi eas in meo iure': Ruiz Asencio, Ruiz Albi, and Herrero Jiménez, *Los Becerro*

onstrates that the influence of documentation and of memory committed to writing were the two pillars upon which the fortune of religious institutions rested; such institutions, due to the stability they enjoyed throughout the ages, have efficiently conserved important archives.

In the process of the social construction of the rural landscape, the written record of memory was as important as the material and monumental characteristics of stone ecclesiastical buildings, which, during the Middle Ages, stood out in striking fashion in a landscape dominated by buildings constructed in wood, adobe, ephemeral materials, and, on occasion, small stone plinths.³ And even before the consolidation of the parish system — a phenomenon that brought with it the identification of local communities with churches, these latter converted thenceforth into the central space of villages and the place in which their identity was made manifest⁴ — the many churches that littered Alavese territory represented important points of spatial and political reference in a society that was highly diversified.

Álava is one of the areas of the north-west of the peninsula that most easily lends itself to an analysis of early medieval churches incorporating both documentary evidence and the material register, due to the fact that it enjoys one of the largest collections of both buildings and textual references (Map 2.1). For this reason, the objective of this article will be to analyse the political and social processes related to the construction and management of churches in Álava from the ninth to the eleventh centuries. This article forms part of a wider project, utilizing different types of data and source bases, which we have been developing over the last few years on the formation of early medieval Álava.⁵ This is a territory of almost 3000 km², composed of different geographical zones: Aiala and Zuia, in the most northerly zone, act as valleys that mark

Gótico y Galicano de Valpueda, no. 1 (18/XII/804), henceforth Cval.

³ No complete synthesis on early medieval domestic architecture in the Basque Country has been written, but useful reference points are to be found in Azkarate and Quirós Castillo, 'Arquitectura doméstica altomedieval en la Península Ibérica'; Azkarate and Solaun, 'Nacimiento y transformación de un asentamiento altomedieval'; Quirós Castillo, 'La arquitectura doméstica de los yacimientos rurales'.

⁴ Perhaps the most impressive example extant in Álava is the case of the hermitage of San Martín de Agurain, which was the first church of the early medieval village of Agurain and was integrated within the structures of the local authority (*ayuntamiento*) with the foundation of the royal *villa* of Salvatierra sobre Agurain. See Alfaro, 'La iglesia en su paisaje medieval'.

⁵ Quirós Castillo and Santos Salazar, 'I villaggi medievali nell'alto Ebro alla luce dei testi e dell'archeologia'; Santos Salazar, 'Obispos, abades, presbíteros y aldeas'.



Map 2.1. Location map of the study area: Álava (northern Spain). Map by the authors.

the transition from the Cantabrian landscape to the Ebro valley, the extensive central plain, the Alavese sector of the Rioja to the south (which corresponds with the zone of the river Ebro), and the western valleys (Map 2.1), where the border between the autonomous communities of Castilla-León and the Basque Country snakes its way through the landscape. This administrative dividing line will not feature heavily in this study, since its limits will frequently be exceeded in order to follow the patrimonial activity of the principal actors of this region, from the Counts of Lantarón and Álava, to the Bishops of Valpuesta or the rulers of the Kingdom of Pamplona, all of whom were actors interested in the government and management of spaces and properties that today are located beyond the province.

The article will be composed of three parts: first, Alavese early medieval churches will be analysed via the prism of written sources; second, some of the principal conclusions gathered from the archaeology of churches will be discussed; third, a more global reflection on the political, economic, and social meaning of the possession of churches will be offered.

Early Medieval Churches in Álava in the Written Sources

Alavese Churches in the Documents of the Ninth to Eleventh Centuries

The study of early medieval churches in the north of the peninsula can lay claim to a solid historiographical tradition, which from diverse theoretical starting points and with different interests at stake, has analysed the juridical, canonical, economic, political, and territorial significance represented by the construction of ecclesiastical buildings.⁶ In recent times analyses less influenced by narratives of ‘repoblación’ and ‘reconquista’ have been developed, promoting the study of the roles of churches and monasteries in such a way that these can be seen as fundamental platforms in the construction of landscapes of power that function in line with the interests of subregional and supralocal territorial elites;⁷ these have influenced new approaches to the value and meaning of religious buildings, which cast these latter as the principal instrument in the creation of economic networks and social relations.⁸

In the Alavese case, interpretations have been influenced by the (limited) quantity and nature of the documentary material capable of shedding light on the history of what is a territory characterized by geographical variation, and for which we must go without coherent collections of documents of the sort preserved in other areas of Europe. Even so, by conducting a review of every reference to Alavese churches recorded in the monastic cartularies that extend to cover, *grosso modo*, a triangle joining the abbeys of Santa María del Puerto,

⁶ An exhaustive account cannot be given here, but we might remember that at the beginning of the twentieth century the juridical school reflected upon the problem of ‘independent’ churches in the work of Torres and Bigador, who were themselves very influenced by the studies undertaken by Stutz. An introduction to the topic can be found in Rodríguez Gil, ‘Consideraciones sobre una antigua polémica’. Likewise we should not forget the studies of J. Orlandis, compiled in Orlandis, *Estudios sobre instituciones monásticas medievales*. In the case of Álava, the institutionalist approach of S. Ruiz de Loizaga stands out; for further information, see Ruiz de Loizaga, *Monasterios altomedievales en el Occidente de Álava*, or Martínez Diez, ‘El obispado de Valpuesta 881–1087’.

⁷ Influenced by the classic studies of Bonnassie, ‘Las comunidades rurales en Cataluña (siglos IX–XIII)’; Mínguez ‘Ruptura social e implantación del feudalismo en el noroeste peninsular (siglos VIII–X)’; Martínez Sopena, *La Tierra de Campos Occidental*; Loring García, ‘Nobleza e iglesias propias en la Cantabria’; López Alsina, *La ciudad de Santiago de Compostela*; and more recently, Peña Bocos, *La atribución social del espacio en la Castilla Altomedieval*.

⁸ Martín Viso, ‘Monasterios y poder aristocrático’; Larrea, ‘Construir iglesias, construir territorio’. For a more general reflection, see Davies, *Acts of Giving*.

Covarrubias, and San Juan de la Peña, it has been possible to recover, for the years 804 to 1114, a hundred or so documents that testify to the existence of ecclesiastical buildings in the territory studied here. We thus arrive at a figure of little more than a hundred (clearly recognizable) churches, to which we ought to add fourteen *decanía* linked to some of these former.⁹ Obviously, not all of the collections that guard the memory of Alavese people or settlements preserve information about their churches. But the holdings of Arlanza, Silos,¹⁰ Covarrubias, Oña, Valpuesta, San Millán, Albelda, Irache, and Leire point to the existence of Alavese churches or the foundation-possession of other formal places of worship by counts, bishops, or *seniors* closely linked to the area.

As has been stated, the chronological distribution of these references is widespread.¹¹ The written record ranges from eleven documents dated to the ninth century (seven of which come from the period 864–75¹²) to thirty-three references from the tenth century, a figure which grows to forty-three in the eleventh century. These sources show how churches that were the patrimony of counts, kings, priests, and lay lords appear in the archives of monasteries with which their owners or founders maintained political, social, and economic relations. This apart, no other written information remains,¹³ with only archaeology able to provide new information on churches that do not appear in the documentary record.

⁹ Those churches whose original location is unknown have not been counted here, due to their later abandonment or disappearance.

¹⁰ This has been included because the authors have used the Silos version of the foundation document of Tobillas, which is also conserved in the holdings of San Salvador de Oña. Recourse has been made to the recently published work of Larrea, 'Construir Iglesias, construir territorio'.

¹¹ To this, one must add a dozen twelfth-century documents that serve to sharpen our knowledge of ecclesiastical establishments already active in the preceding century.

¹² This notwithstanding, four of those ten documents appear to be heavily interpolated. Our awareness of a fifth document is due to its mention by Argaiz, *La Soledad Laureada*, VI, 560 (year 897). Thus, exactly half of the ninth-century documents are marred by problems of content and tradition.

¹³ Hence the importance of the development of medieval archaeology and the archaeology of architecture, which have allowed us to document the existence of a substantial group of churches which were unknown until relatively recently, and to date with more precision the first phases of other buildings documented in medieval cartularies.

Episcopal Churches in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries: An Instrument of Power and a Link between Local Society and Central Authority

Between the years 804 and 947, a dozen charters document the relationship between Alavese churches and the patrimony, activity, or mere presence of bishops active in the region.¹⁴ This is a significant number of testimonies (representing almost a third of the total number of charters conserved in that period), and they contain fundamental information with which to understand the mechanisms of territorial control at the local level, and at that of the region, as well as the construction of political relationships on a grander scale, all of which sometimes exceed the limits of a single comital demarcation.

The earliest document, which has suffered interpolations dated to the end of the eleventh century, is a *narratio* protagonized by Bishop Juan of Valpuesta.¹⁵ Significantly, this is the first document to demonstrate the presence of a prelate in the region, who in this case appears, moreover, restoring a series of churches, including Valpuesta itself,¹⁶ and a handful of buildings situated in between the valleys of Losa and Valdegobía, between Burgos and Álava. Neither Barrau Dihigo nor Floriano doubted the document's essential authenticity but highlighted its many interpolations.¹⁷ In effect, the comparison with similar documents in which abbots are seen to have exercised the mechanism of *presura*¹⁸ in neighbouring regions (Tobillas, Losa, Mena) confirms this analysis, even allowing for the difficulties supposed by a complex documentary tradition. We are therefore faced here with the first testimony to link directly the region's social elites and the practice of the 'restoration' and possession of ecclesiastical buildings, although the very nature of the document does not allow us to know to

¹⁴ Two of these are falsifications dated to the twelfth century. The first narrates the concession of a privilege of immunity to Valpuesta by Alfonso II, Cval, no. 2 (year 804). The second cites a single bishop called Bíbere. Ubieto Arteta, *Cartulario de San Millán de la Cogolla*, no. 7 (year 864), henceforth SMC. In three documents of the ninth century one can observe the direct possession of churches by prelates, a situation which is repeated in the first half of the tenth century.

¹⁵ Cval, no. 1 (18/XII/804).

¹⁶ Cval, no. 1: 'sic ueni in locum que uocitant Ualle Conposita, et inueni ibi eglesia deserta [...] et construxi uel confirmabi ipsa eglesia in ipso loco'.

¹⁷ See the long commentary undertaken by this latter in Floriano, *Diplomática española del periodo astur*, pp. 107–12. A radical proponent of the document's total uselessness to the historian is Martínez Díez, 'Las instituciones del reino astur a través de los diplomas', p. 95.

¹⁸ The *presura* is a very particular kind of charter, in which, thanks to a legal fiction, one lord (very often a priest or bishop) takes control of an estate (land, vineyards, forests, and rights).

any great extent the actors and strategies which underlie the basis of the social power, economic might, and religious charisma of these people. Nonetheless, the utilization of the term *presura* (in this period documented across the northern peninsula) demonstrates, as Larrea and Viader have shown, the capacity of these elites to assail the local sphere by means of invoking 'legal fictions' to support their claims to be starting from scratch in places supposedly characterized by abandoned churches and uncultivated land, thereby allowing newcomers such as themselves to create networks of territorial articulation and social domination in dialectical relation with local communities, while also constructing the bases of social hegemony that would be developed in the following decades and engender social tension that would crystallize in the tenth century.¹⁹

In order to obtain a more detailed and complex vision of such processes one has to wait until the last few years of the ninth century and the beginning of the tenth, when the documentation gradually becomes more explicit. Once again it is the holdings of Valpuesta that best illuminate the process (and it could hardly not be thus, given that we are dealing with the nucleus of episcopal power in the most westerly sector of Álava), this time by way of documentation that has to do with the Bishops Felmiro, Fredulfo, and Diego. The second and third of these three are seen to be in control of the property of other churches, which thus came to be added to the earliest episcopal patrimony. Fredulfo is recorded in a document from 894, founding the monastery of San Román de Villa Merosa, to which he donated houses and a good part of the property he owned in the village.²⁰ The image of this strong relationship between the bishop and Villa Merosa is brought into even sharper focus by another document in which the nephew of the prelate, another Bishop of Valpuesta named Diego, describes how he built 'kasas in Villa Merosa, in solares de meo tio Fradulfo'.²¹ This last document (which perhaps conjoins two different donations made by Diego to Valpuesta in one single legal text) allows us to know something about the alternative mechanisms of local lordship obtained by this episcopal family.²² Churches seem to be the structure upon which their economic supremacy

¹⁹ Santos Salazar, 'Obispos, abades, presbíteros y aldeas'.

²⁰ Cval, no. 7 (year 894): 'donamus hunc locum abitationis nostre, domicilia, libros, bineas, ortos, pomiferos, agros frumentarios'.

²¹ Cval, no. 16 (year 940).

²² Cval, no. 16 (year 940): 'Ego Didacus feci cum meos germanos Fredenando Blascoz, Didaco Fredenandoz vel omnes vicinos de Villa Merosa, fecimus alia et concedimus ad regula Sancte Marie serna de valle Sorrozana et illas de Paubalias [...] concedimus eas ad regula Sancte Marie que ibi deserviant perpetualiter pro remedio anime nostre'.

was organized, since it was commonplace that they were appended to landed assets of dimensions that outstripped the holdings of lay elites; this served, at the same time, to bolster their social hegemony, because it was on land controlled by episcopal churches that villagers lent their labour and in so doing demonstrated their subjection.²³ This was a lordship that was to be easily converted into political power.

Many such documents demonstrate the relationship between counts and prelates, that is to say, between comital and episcopal authorities within the political framework of the Kingdom of Asturias. In 879, Bishop Almiro consecrated the restoration of Santa María de Lara undertaken by Flámula, the wife of Count Gonzalo Téllez of Lantarón, as is indicated by a notice included in the Becerro of Quintanilla de las Viñas, the whereabouts of which are today unknown.²⁴ It is not difficult to connect Almiro with a certain Felmiro, who was active in Valpuesta and its surrounding valleys during the same period,²⁵ in the area situated between Old Castile and Lantarón, and it is indeed probable that he was a member of the retinue of Gonzalo Téllez. Both appear in areas beyond the territory of Lantarón-Valpuesta at a time in which the Count rivalled his wife's family for the procurement of the county of Castile.²⁶ The relationship between both can also be deduced from a document from Valpuesta from 911, which details a dispute between Analso and Santa María which was resolved thanks to an oath undertaken on the orders of the Count of Lantarón. After Felmiro's death, his successor as bishop, Fredulfo, maintained this close political relationship, lending his name, together with that of the Count, to a donation made to San Román de Tobillas.²⁷

The government of the territory appears therefore to have been intimately linked to episcopal and comital authority, but in order for this to work effectively, prelates needed to rely on more than the charisma attached to their title (we are, of course, far removed from the formal ecclesiastical hierarchies visible in the time of Carolingian Europe). This power needed tangible material bases,

²³ Martín Viso, *Poblamiento y estructuras sociales*, p. 227.

²⁴ Pastor Díaz de Garayo, *Castilla en el tránsito de la Antigüedad al Feudalismo*, p. 130.

²⁵ The same Felmiro mentioned in Cval, no. 10 (year 911).

²⁶ The interest of Flámula in the Lara area and the foundation of the monastery of San Pedro de Arlanza in 912 (Arlanza, no. III) seem to demonstrate this. On the integrity of the foundation document of Gonzalo Téllez and the invention of the foundation document of Fernán González, see Escalona Monge, Azcárate Aguilar-Amat, and Larrañaga Zulueta, 'De la crítica diplomática a la ideología política', pp. 169–74.

²⁷ Lost document cited by Argaiz, *La Soledad Laureada*, VI, 561.

namely, landed estates, forests, and livestock, which appear, almost always, appended to the private control of churches (or of parts of churches). This was a mechanism of social distinction to which other people, such as priests and lay elites, also had access, but on a lesser scale when compared with the assets accumulated by bishops (about which documentary information has not been well preserved), which must have been accompanied by privileges stemming from their closeness to comital power and their recognition by the Asturian monarchy. Although no such charters have survived, churches, 'extant' in both written and architectural form, provide evidence of strong social hierarchization and a complex political cosmos that took shape in this territory from the beginning of the ninth century.

Salcedo: The Creation of *Seigneurial* Lordship at the Supralocal Level (Tenth Century)

The early medieval documentation of Álava has preserved many a memory of the monastery of Salcedo, in the western fringes of the region. This group of documents underlines the complexity of ecclesiastical authority, raised in the previous paragraph, in which it was made clear that although the power that bishops exercised over certain centres was important, it did not extend to all churches located in the vicinity of the episcopal see. The documentary dossier that illuminates the historical evolution of San Esteban de Salcedo (between the ninth and tenth centuries), composed of seventeen charters from the Becerro de San Millán, would appear to be one of the best vehicles with which to approach the study of the historical trajectory of rural Alavese monasteries and their relationship with a broad range of social groups, as well as the respective strategies employed by these groups in the construction of lordships between the later years of the ninth century and the eleventh.

A brief examination of this information shows the progressive creation of the seigneurial lordship of the monastery of Salcedo, which was based upon the many donations it received from members drawn from across Alavese society. The documentation does not, however, provide any clues regarding the origin of the monastery. Its first mention dates from the last third of the ninth century, which allows us to deduce that it was founded before the period for which we have documents, a consideration that does not allow us to observe economic and social strategies hidden behind its construction. Successive donations to Salcedo do demonstrate, however, the different social logics that interacted with the monastery, which itself stimulated the piety and interests of a broad range of people, from prominent village-level groups to medium-scale proprie-

tors who donated small portions of lands (fields, vineyards, and salt works). Amongst this first group, the priest Martin and his companions stand out, for they made a donation in 873 of some churches (the whereabouts of which remain hard to pin down) ‘cum montes, agros et pertinentia.’²⁸ The control of this and other ecclesiastical centres must have been one of the fundamental pillars of the seigneurial influence of Salcedo since it was thanks to this that it was able to administer a wide range of movable and immovable goods which in turn allowed it to occupy a privileged space in a social panorama in which dependent establishments emerged and came to attract donations in the area. This process of the control of churches experienced a notable growth between the years 937 and 964. In this period Salcedo received six churches (*ecclesiae et monasteria*) situated between the Sierra Salvada, Cuartango, and San Miguel de Bayas.

These donations are characterized by other interesting aspects. For a start, not all of them were made by priests, who feature in a large part of the ninth-century documentation in which churches loomed large. To the tale of Martin can be added, more than half a century later, the donation of the abbot Lifuare and his companions, who together transferred churches in the valley of Espinedo to Salcedo and its abbot Nuño.²⁹ But during the tenth century the transfer of churches by lay families to Salcedo is more common, such as that donated by Sarraceno Ovécóz, and his brother and mother, owners of the church of Saints Justo and Pastor ‘in loco qui dicitur Quartanigo’,³⁰ or that donated by Munio Niquétiz and his wife Lopa, owners of San Miguel de Bayas,³¹ or that of Semedonno and his sister, proprietors of San Víctor de Gardea, transferred to Salcedo in 964.³² A growth in the number of churches transferred by lay parties throughout the first half of the tenth century has been brought to our attention in recent times by Wendy Davies’s ambitious study of the greater part of the monastic and cathedral charter collections of northern Spain.³³ As one can see, these considerations coincide in part with what we have seen in our analysis of Salcedo. Nonetheless, to explain the social logic behind these strategies is a more complex task, all the more so because they are not made explicit in the documents.

²⁸ SMC, no. 15 (18/IV/873).

²⁹ SMC, no. 24 (year 937).

³⁰ SMC, no. 57 (year 950).

³¹ SMC, no. 70 (year 956).

³² SMC, no. 85 (year 964).

³³ Davies, *Acts of Giving*, pp. 50–51. For a wider context, see Wood, *The Proprietary Church in the Medieval West*.

In the three documents cited above, the transfers were made *pro remedio animae*, which infers that Salcedo had managed to acquire a certain spiritual prestige between the Bayas basin and the headwaters of the Nervión. This type of document also appears to respond to other factors, which, without wishing to underplay the significance of genuine religious feeling, allow us to appreciate that the donors (who are, we must not forget, members of the village elite) may have been moved by other considerations. The most important of these considerations seems to have been the creation of a client-patron relationship with Salcedo, which seems to have already controlled an important array of landed assets by the middle of the tenth century. Some families could afford to donate their churches as a means by which they could enter the political and military patronage networks of the monastery,³⁴ and in so doing added to their own prestige in the areas in which they owned land; in fact, local societies committed to memory the origins of such buildings,³⁵ and their founders appeared henceforth to be closely linked to the monastery of Salcedo. The chronological span in which these donations take place coincides, moreover, with a period of political change in the region, observable in the gradual dissolution of the political space of Lantarón and the unification of the Counties of Castile and Álava under the aegis of Fernán González. These changes might have meant, at the local level, new power relations which may well have brought certain families closer to monastic institutions, with the object of reinforcing the prestige of these former at the level of the *comarca*, as benefactors of Salcedo.

The importance of Salcedo continued to grow steadily thanks to another, more modest, type of donation, namely fields/plots of land and vineyards; eight dated to the tenth century have survived, five of which can be dated to the period 937 to 959.³⁶ Once again the documents testify to the central role played by Salcedo as a recipient of donation in a moment of singular significance, that is, just after the last reference to the county, which can be dated to 935, and is thus in keeping with a pattern established by the transfers of churches realized

³⁴ On the importance of donations to channel social-political relations, see also the case of Galicia in José Carlos Sánchez-Pardo's essay in this volume.

³⁵ In the case of western Álava, where after the activity of Vela in the first third of the tenth century we hear of no more church foundations or restorations, we can look to Davies's hypothesis: donation for ritual commemoration probably replaced foundation of churches as the principal means of perpetuating memory. Davies, *Acts of Giving*, pp. 133–34.

³⁶ Donations in SMC, nos. 19 (year 912), 25 (year 937), 28 (year 940), 32 (year 943), 62 (year 951), 84 (year 959), 101 (year 989), and 119 (tenth century).

by village elites.³⁷ Efforts to cultivate relations with the monastery appear to have been reinforced by the very nature of the documents and seem to characterize not only *possessores* located in the vicinity of the monastery, but also social groups active in the area between the basins of the Oroncillo and the Ebro, a landscape that seems to have corresponded with the principal course of monastic patrimonial expansion, reaching as far as Grañón and Tormantos too. In the last few years of the tenth century, Salcedo must have controlled a seignorial space of dimensions that corresponded to the *comarca*, only a small but significant part of which is recorded in the documents; its landed estates and appurtenances must have facilitated the monastery's achievement of a certain socio-political leadership in the western fringes of Alavese territory, on a scale that was, admittedly, inferior to that of counts and bishops but greater than that of the village-level elites who themselves slowly came to assume roles as their clients.

The Ecclesiastical Patrimony of Regional Aristocracies (Eleventh Century)

The greater number of documents dated to the period of García el de Najera (1035–54) and beyond allows us to approach the historical trajectory of the Alavese churches in more detail, above all in the central-eastern zones, which seem to have been a veritable political and social laboratory during the government of the descendants of Sancho III, in the context of a series of wider changes sweeping the Kingdom of Pamplona.³⁸ This is the moment in which the documentation permits a detailed examination of landed holdings and the ends to which some aristocratic groups used their churches.

The figure of Álvaro Díaz, often cited in the sources as *domno* Marcelo,³⁹ brings to life this new abundance of documentation, as he is one of the best documented figures in the region. His prestigious position as a member of the narrow circle of Sancho IV's collaborators resulted in his being rewarded the

³⁷ Fernán González in Lantarone en Cval, no. 14 (18/II/935).

³⁸ Larrea, *La Navarre du IV^e au XI^e siècle*, pp. 343–73.

³⁹ We can observe this double mention if we compare a document from Oña, Álamo, *Colección diplomática de San Salvador de Oña (822–1214)*, no. 92 (year 1087), henceforth Oña, in which the widow Doña Goto, mentions her late husband as a *senior Marcellus*, with information from San Millán in which the widow appears again donating goods (in this case to the Riojan monastery) 'pro remedio de meo seniore Alvaro Didaz': Ledesma Rubio, *El Cartulario de San Millán de la Cogolla (1076–1200)* (henceforth SMC2), no. 158.

administration of Marañón,⁴⁰ which was accompanied by an evident political protagonism in Álava, thanks to his marriage to Goto, herself a member of the Alavese comital family.⁴¹ Quite apart from the facts they provide about his political activity, the richness of the documentation related to Álvaro Díaz and his wife calls our attention to the hitherto unrivalled patrimony of an aristocratic couple whose estates were located across a large area that extends from the northern Rioja to the centre of Álava, and from there to the most westerly territory of what is now Navarre.⁴² In this light, it is not surprising that a good part of the familial holdings appear in donations made to the monastery of San Salvador de Leire, at a time when its abbot was also Bishop of Álava; the naming of this latter to the office of bishop also indicates that Sancho IV was willing to reorganize the administration of Alavese comital and episcopal territories.⁴³

The donation that provides the bulk of our knowledge about the churches under the family's control dates to 1071. Álvaro Díaz and Goto, together with their children, donated to Leire the church of San Miguel de Ripa, Santa Gemma and other holdings, and *decanías* of Ripa situated on both sides of the river Ebro, between what are now Álava and Rioja.⁴⁴ In a similar context, the donations of Don Marcelo to Leire hint at a strong political motive, which is to report attempts to come to an agreement regarding an important part of his patrimony in the Rioja and Álava with the Navarrese monastery as a result of client relations with the Bishop of Álava, the abbot of Leire. The personal holdings of the couple must have amounted to much more than we see cited in the documentation, and it must also have included the control of servants, land, infrastructure (pits, mills), participation in the exploitation of forested areas, plus a large number of private monasteries and churches, whose number was

⁴⁰ Amongst the many testimonies which record him fulfilling this role is SMC, no. 344. At the end of his life he also exercised a commission in Término and Pancorbo in the name of Sancho II of Castile: SMC, no. 413.

⁴¹ Although the documentation never cites him as *comes* in Álava. The only exception to this rule is a single private charter, in Lacarra, *Colección Diplomática de Irache*, no. 23 (year 1062) in which *dompno* Marcielle makes an appearance described as *comite* in Álava. For the identification of the family of his wife, see Fortún Pérez de Ciriza, 'El dominio alavés de San Salvador de Leire', p. 343.

⁴² 'Richness' here is of course taken to mean richness in relative terms for the period and place.

⁴³ It was not for nothing that the abbot of Leire was Bishop Fortún of Álava, in Martín Duque, *Documentación medieval de Leire* (henceforth Leire), no. 93 (year 1071).

⁴⁴ Leire, no. 93 (year 1071).

certainly higher than that which is recorded in the charters of this Navarrese monastery, as two fragmentary accounts dated to after Álvaro Díaz's death prove, providing as they do indications of landed wealth which probably came from Goto's family. It is instructive, indeed, that it was Goto, in 1087, who transferred assets in memory of her husband to San Millán and Oña, amongst which were included the church of San Miguel de Álava or the monastery of San Cebrián de Villaluenga.⁴⁵

The donation to Leire dated to 1071 was the beginning of a long process in which the wishes of Álvaro Díaz and Goto do not seem to have been respected. The death of the Navarrese powerbroker in the following months⁴⁶ may well have allowed one of his heirs to hinder the efficient transfer of the donated assets. Further to this, a group of documents dated to the period 1108–13 shows how a good part of these assets remained in the hands of the children and grandchildren of this couple some forty years later.⁴⁷ Only then (forty years later) did the donation of San Miguel de Ripa to Leire take effect, although one can, reading between the lines, note a certain reluctance to complete the transfer on the part of some family members, above all the couple's son Munio Álvarez. These records demonstrate the control that part of this family group exercised over other ecclesiastical institutions, which were then, in turn, added to the initial donation. This was, in short, a patrimonial portfolio which demonstrates the supraregional dimensions of the holdings of Álvaro Díaz and Goto, the result, most probably, of their marriage, their extensive links to other Alavese and Navarrese lineages, and their political status within the realm. Control over the jurisdiction of Marañón guaranteed Don Marcelo the benefits of rents and a position of privilege in Álava which easily translated into acquisitory power, as well as the preservation of hegemony throughout the region, thereby allowing his son Fortún Álvarez to assume his father's position in Marañón immediately after his death.⁴⁸

An analysis of the ecclesiastical centres donated to Leire by Don Marcelo and his descendants reveals the economic puissance of these aristocratic fami-

⁴⁵ SMC2, no. 158, and Oña, no. 92, respectively.

⁴⁶ Which must have taken place in the early months of 1072, since a document dated to July records that 'in hoc anno obiit domno Marcelle': Leire, no. 95.

⁴⁷ There are seven documents: Leire, nos. 222, 224, 230, 231, 238, 239, 254.

⁴⁸ This was a political pre-eminence that was maintained in the coming years. For good reason, a grandson of Don Marcelo, Álvaro Muñoz, son of Munio Álvarez, was to be awarded the jurisdiction of the new district of Treviño, a new platform of royal power created by Sancho IV after he took control of its fortress.

lies and it serves also as a touchstone with regard to our understanding of the dimensions of the patrimony of the magnates of the Kingdom of Pamplona on the cusp of the regicide at Peñalén.⁴⁹ The picture presented by the documents concerning the family shows us some twenty-six ecclesiastical buildings (plus four *decanías*) in Treviño, in the Alavese border regions with Navarre, in the western part of this latter, and in the northern Rioja. To this portfolio one must add the monasteries donated in memory of Don Marcelo by Goto,⁵⁰ his widow, which demonstrates that the family looked towards centres linked to the Castilian monarchy, searching, perhaps, to insert itself after the death of Sancho IV amidst new military client networks in areas traditionally under Castilian domination.⁵¹

Community Churches

The documentation includes, between the ninth and eleventh centuries, very few references to ecclesiastical centres controlled by community institutions (*concilia*) or else in the hands of groups characterized by their informal structures (*vicinos*).⁵² Moreover, it occurs at the very moment in which these groups come into contact with the ecclesiastical aristocracy. That is to say that we glimpse their fleeting journey through the sources in the precise moment in which seigneurial power comes to obtain (normally by means of donation) diverse gradations of control over community churches. Such is the limited and complex nature of our documentation that it is very difficult to shed light on the social and economic relations that lay behind the construction and management of churches built by village communities. Such groups must never be considered to have been free of their own internal hierarchies, even if their characteristics seem attenuated by the definitions imposed upon them by the written sources, which, furthermore, conceal under simple references to *con-*

⁴⁹ On this, see Santos Salazar, *Una familia aristocrática en un tiempo de crisis*.

⁵⁰ Furthermore, donations made *pro remedio animae* by *dopna* Goto clearly illustrate strategies of family commemoration which in this case were closely linked to the activity of the widow of Don Marcelo. On the role of monasteries and family commemoration, see Bougard, Le Jan, and La Rocca, *Sauver son âme et se perpétuer*.

⁵¹ Leire would not be thus privileged again until the reign of Alfonso the Battler.

⁵² The Catalan case was different, and its extensive archival material offers numerous examples of churches in the hands of village communities in the Pyrenees. See Bonnassie, 'Las comunidades rurales en Cataluña', who thinks the silence in this respect with regard to Alavese documents is a diplomatic problem.

cilia what were highly articulated groups who must have partaken in the management of churches and the different challenges posed by economic and social consideration in each village. Two examples, from opposite ends of the chronological span here considered, will be explored: on the one hand, the church of Villamanca, cited in the ninth-century testament of Abbot Avito,⁵³ and, on the other, the church of Islares, situated outside the territory studied in this article, but useful nonetheless as a means of offering an example to help us understand similar mechanisms to those documented in Álava.⁵⁴

In the first case, it is made clear that the villagers of Villamanca gave their church (*tradiderant mici*) to the abbot. Larrea, in a study dedicated to Avito and the ninth- and tenth-century happenings in San Roman de Tobillas, has recently pointed out the difficulty we face when it comes to decoding the wide range of factors that could occasion the community's decision to donate its church, but he is in no doubt that it was the 'estratos superiores' of the local society of Villamanca who played the pivotal role.⁵⁵ This seems to be bolstered by other references to groups of a clearly public character, also defined as *concilia*, in which there appears a great difference between *máximos et mínimos*, who maintained, nonetheless, channels of contact which converged in comital courts.⁵⁶ What this did not prevent, it should be made clear, was that from one village to the next (with significant variation between them), some churches originally founded in a less socially polarized society found themselves absorbed into the patrimony or areas of influence of an increasingly small group of families; all of this took place in accordance with the growth of hierarchical tensions, crystallizing in the creation, at some unknown stage of the ninth century, of the county of Lantarón and the bishopric of Valpuesta. The patrimony held by churches (in particular *las sernas*)⁵⁷ and the right to exploit community

⁵³ The document is cited by Larrea, 'Construir iglesias, construir territorio', p. 324.

⁵⁴ I refer to the case of the church of Fuentes, a village that would end up as part of the territory of the royal *villa* of Salinas de Añana; see Plata Montero, *Génesis de una villa medieval*.

⁵⁵ Larrea, 'Construir iglesias, construir territorio', p. 329.

⁵⁶ As occurred in the case in which the council of Barrio, Berbeia y San Zadornil defended its interests before the court of the Count of Castile, highlighting the presence of *maximos et minimos*. The document is known from a copy in the Becerro of San Millán and is suspected of being interpolated.

⁵⁷ The *serna* is an estate which can be controlled by different kind of owners (*possessores*), from communities to lords. It was the basic cell of agrarian exploitation in the villages, and in this sense, many testimonies, from the ninth to the eleventh centuries, reveal the importance of the *serna* in the configuration of the ecclesiastical landscapes.

spaces (fields, woods, streams) that often went with it, made churches a fundamental instrument with which to disturb the existing economic balance at the local level. Once this had been broken, it would not be difficult for the families who continued to safeguard the interest of the church to translate their economic superiority into social hegemony, and both of these into political power. The principal methodological problem to afflict this hypothesis lies in the lack of texts that clearly demonstrate a similar trajectory, which latter has nevertheless always been taken for granted in the light of other indications, such as, for example, the control of parts of churches by priests or lords in institutions which originally belonged to the community.⁵⁸

This strategy is better documented (given the nature of our sources) when its chief protagonists happened to be bishops and priests (as has been shown above). The conduct of these religious groups could have spurred on some lay groups in search of similar objectives since these latter, witnesses to the achievements of abbots and priests appropriating churches via *presura* or otherwise, opted to choose identical strategies, accumulating rights and portions of church property in their sphere of patrimonial influence. The patterns set in play by Avito or Juan de Valpuesta could have, then, facilitated a gradual change in the dialectic of social relations at the village level, which was to bring about as its principal consequence a tension that underlay the hierarchization of local societies. This process, although probably not applicable to every Alavese village, allows us to explain the rapid and general emergence of *seniores* in the documentation related to this territory throughout the tenth century.

The example of the church of Islares may be of use when it comes to the observation of subtle differences in the management of community churches. In 1073 the *concilium* of the village donated its church (dedicated to San Martín) to Santa María del Puerto.⁵⁹ Information given in the document allows us to infer a relationship between the local society of Islares which was of greater dialectical complexity than that which other cases, such as that of Fontes, allow us to see.⁶⁰ In Islares, the council is indeed cited, but even so, in this case the

⁵⁸ Such as, for example, the case of the *portiones* which were the property of Abbot Folio of the church of San Julián de Villanueva de Valdegovía: SMC, no. 42; see Martín Viso, *Poblamiento y estructuras*, p. 185.

⁵⁹ Serrano y Sanz, 'El cartulario de la iglesia de Santa Maria del Puerto', doc. VII (a. 1073); its editor assigned the document an incorrect date (a. 973).

⁶⁰ SMC2, no. 3 (01/XI/1077): 'Nos igitur, omnes de Fontes, tam viri quam mulieres, toto concilio pariter, placuit nobis pro redeptionem animarum nostrarum, donamus et confirmamus una ecclesia nomine Sancti Sabastiani, in caput villa'.

citation does not prevent us from suspecting the existence of a group of families that dominated both the council and the administration of the church. Parts of the church are in the hands of a limited number of family members, named alongside reference to their siblings and heirs. Moreover, it is made clear that the donation was made *cum licentia senior Lope Sansoz*, who in this period crops up in documentation as *dominante* in the northern part of Castile. San Martín de Islares was indeed a church controlled by a community, but not by all of the free inhabitants of the village. It actually seems to have been the property of a local elite, with the participation of groups residing in neighbouring villages (as the presence of three brothers from Coriezo, now Guriezo, or of Lope Íñiguez de Sámano seems to demonstrate); this seems to reveal the existence of active social groups within the locality, and also that, given the importance of donation in light of its social and economic consequences, these groups needed the approval of the *senior* who represented public power in the area. In short, the church functioned as a platform upon which small groups of people built their power, which benefitted these groups and thus guaranteed their superiority. The donation to Puerto must have therefore provided that select group of people with access to social relations about which we must remain ignorant.

Four Stories and a Funeral: The Archaeology of Medieval Churches in Álava

The study of the archaeology of early medieval churches has been profoundly revitalized in recent years due to the combination of two factors which have developed in parallel: on the one hand, the implementation since the 1990s of regulations regarding preventive interventions have established the need to study monumental architecture before undertaking restoration,⁶¹ thereby allowing intervention in a significant and growing number of buildings, the identification of new multi-stratified constructions which include early medieval paraments, and the discovery of new churches via archaeological excavation; on the other hand, the development of the archaeology of architecture,⁶²

⁶¹ More precisely, the promulgation of Ley de Patrimonio Cultural Vasco (1990) and the creation of a decentralized administrative system that works in union with Diputaciones Forales.

⁶² We currently rely upon two critical evaluations of the practice, theory, and methodology of the archaeology of architecture; the volume edited by the Ministry of Culture: De Vega and Martín Morales, *Arqueología aplicada al estudio e interpretación de edificios históricos*; and the proceedings of the colloquium: Brogiolo, *Archeologia dell'Architettura: temi e prospettive di ricerca*.

oriented towards the systematic study of the architectonic register and based on the stratigraphy of walls, has permitted a notable improvement in our analytical techniques and instruments of analysis. The convergence of these tendencies has allowed for the identification in the Basque Country of fifty or so constructions datable to the sixth to eleventh centuries, although the majority of churches are located in the territory of Álava.⁶³ In chronological terms, the greater part of the material evidence dates to the tenth and eleventh centuries, with only the odd building dated to the sixth, an absence of buildings from the seventh and eighth, and a few constructions from the ninth century.⁶⁴

However, the majority of archaeological interventions undertaken in the northern peninsula within the context of 'monumental recovery' have had to be limited — in most cases — to the analysis of buildings, and we have not been able to investigate the spatial and population contexts in which they are found.⁶⁵ This strategy has penalized historical interpretations of the social context of early medieval churches, although there has been no lack of studies that have explored alternative critical approaches such as the study of constructive techniques from the perspective of the archaeology of production,⁶⁶ or the articulation of constructive cultures by means of analogical analytical systems.⁶⁷

Although the analysis of documentation and the study of construction processes has led to the identification and interpretation of active social actors in the foundation of early medieval churches,⁶⁸ the extensive study of churches remains the most fruitful avenue when it comes to the analysis of the social meaning of these buildings.⁶⁹ We will consider the case of four churches, exam-

⁶³ The principal archaeological studies on early medieval churches in the Basque Country are Sánchez Zufiaurre, *Técnicas constructivas medievales*; García Camino, *Arqueología y poblamiento en Bizkaia*; Sarasola and Moraza, *Arqueología Medieval en Gipuzkoa*; Quirós Castillo, 'Las iglesias altomedievales en el País Vasco'.

⁶⁴ Cave architecture has not been taken into account, given that it presents a different sort of methodological and interpretative problem.

⁶⁵ This is one of the principal instruments with which to undertake social analyses of monuments, especially when we lack epigraphy and written documents related to the specific buildings: Chavarría Arnau, *Archeologia delle chiese*, pp. 168–69.

⁶⁶ Sánchez Zufiaurre, *Técnicas constructivas medievales*, pp. 288–320.

⁶⁷ Utrero Agudo, *Iglesias tardoantiguas y altomedievales en la Península Ibérica*.

⁶⁸ Larrea, 'Construir iglesias, construir territorio'.

⁶⁹ Brogiolo, 'Dall'archeologia dell'Architettura all'Archeologia della complessità'; Quirós Castillo, 'Las iglesias altomedievales en el País Vasco'.

ined in extensive archaeological projects, which underline four different paths to the building of early medieval churches in Álava.

San Martín de Dulantzi and ‘Strategies of Distinction’ in the Sixth and Seventh Centuries

One of the most interesting recent archaeological finds is that made in the area of Dulantzi, in the actual town of Alegría-Dulantzi, of what appears to be a sixth-century church.⁷⁰ A preventive excavation has identified a building built atop a late Roman funerary space, which is formed by a rectangular apse and features a chamber to its south, an extensive hall probably divided into three naves of at least ten metres in length and five metres in width. In the interior of the apse a tomb has been found which was built at the time of the building’s foundation and adorned with a thick rose-coloured plaster which was probably decorative; in the interior, an adult woman has been found in a secondary context. Moreover, a quadrangular room embellished with a swimming pool covered by stucco work similar to that found in the foundational tomb has been found in the south-western sector of the building.

In functional terms, this building has been interpreted as a church, due to its morphology and orientation, the discovery in the centre of the apse of a fragment of a funerary stela reused as the support of the altar and conserved in situ, the presence in some levels of architectural remains such as latticework, cornices, column drums, etc., and the identification of a hall with a central font indicative of a baptismal pool.⁷¹ It is possible to date to the second half of the sixth century and the duration of the seventh a total of nineteen tombs found in the hall, in the room adjacent to the apse, and towards the outer parts of the nave, at least nine of which contained personal objects and paraphernalia among which weaponry, gold rings, glass and metal vessels, and ceramic ware stand out. The isotope analysis of the palaeodiet has shown that the diet of these individuals was very high values in ¹⁵N with respect to other early medieval cemeteries analysed in the Basque Country, although there are no differences between the individuals who bore personal ornaments and those who did not. In short, the indications of the archaeology allow us to suggest that we could be

⁷⁰ Loza Uriarte and Niso Lorenzo, ‘La intervención arqueológica en el yacimiento de San Martín de Dulantzi’.

⁷¹ Loza Uriarte and Niso Lorenzo, ‘La intervención arqueológica en el yacimiento de San Martín de Dulantzi’.

dealing with a private church belonging to local elites who resorted to 'strategies of distinction', a phenomenon that has been seen in other nearby areas.⁷²

Towards the beginning of the eighth century a more complex settlement formed around the church, the result of the transformation of earlier occupation. And although only a small number of domestic structures have been found, the density of tombs found in relation to the size of the space excavated allows us to think that the settlement was already sizeable. Perhaps the most surprising thing is that the church (and perhaps its owners) had lost the centrality that it/they enjoyed in the earlier phase.

San Julián and Santa Basilisa de Aistra: The Consolidation of Local Powers

From the ninth century onwards, there is written evidence that elites began to found churches as part of a process which encompassed the monumentalization of memory and the construction of a socially reordered landscape. This is several decades later than other areas of the northern peninsula, such as the Asturias. The already much-cited example of Tobillas is a good case in point, illustrating as it does the action of elites who made use of the rhetorical value of the *presura*.⁷³ But the material register reveals other processes which demonstrate that the building of private churches may have represented the consolidation of a longer process begun many centuries before (Aistra) or a form of imposition or encroachment that broke the social balance of rural communities (see below, the case of Zaballa).

Aistra is located in eastern Álava, far from the main centres of documentary production in the early Middle Ages. Excavation here has shown that it was from the sixth and seventh centuries that an early medieval settlement came into being, near a completely abandoned Roman site. One can date from this time a series of structures excavated in the rock which have been associated with the oldest longhouse yet found in the Iberian peninsula (a boat-shaped structure of some eighteen by eight metres) which presents evident parallels with other central European constructions. The discovery of a lyre-shaped buckle and other objects of personal adornment, indicated by the significant consumption of game, allow us to suggest an interpretation of this site which sees its status as that of a local power centre. This social connotation is maintained throughout the early Middle Ages, to such a degree that when in the

⁷² Chavarría Arnau, *Archeologia delle chiese*, pp. 167–69.

⁷³ Larrea, 'Construir iglesias, construir territorio'.



Figure 2.1. Church of San Julián y Santa Basilisa de Aistra. Photograph by Juan Antonio Quirós.

eighth century the site was completely restructured and modified, gaining an assembly room whose shape was dictated by various constructions supported by posts, a new boat-shaped longhouse associated with a cemetery was built, this time of even larger dimensions (twenty-four by ten metres). It is in this social context that a small technically sophisticated church, made with large, newly cut, perfectly square ashlar blocks was built to a very high standard of construction in the first half of the tenth century (Figure 2.1).⁷⁴

San Tirso de Zaballa: The Consolidation of External *Seigneurial* Power

In some other cases, the construction of a church in the heart of a rural community represented an act of force which resulted in the creation of new social systems and dynamics. The village of Zaballa has been comprehensively investigated in the context of a large-scale preventive intervention which has led to the recognition of a lengthy occupational sequence.⁷⁵ The site, located close to the old Roman city of Iruña-Veleia, experienced a low level of occupation during the sixth and seventh centuries, consisting of small farmsteads. As a result of a process of growth, a small village of a dozen domestic buildings took shape over an area of one hectare. In the first half of the tenth century the village was profoundly modified by the construction of a church, rectangular in shape and

⁷⁴ Quirós Castillo, Marzioli, and Lubritto, 'Dating Mortars'.

⁷⁵ Quirós Castillo, *Arqueología del campesinado medieval*.



Figure 2.2. Aerial view of the Church of San Tirso de Zaballa. Photograph by Juan Antonio Quirós.

measuring nineteen by eleven metres, in the very heart of the early medieval village. Furthermore, outside the church a *cellarium* or storage space was built, consisting of large silo pits (of a capacity of 6300 litres) designed to store food rents (Figure 2.2). The building of this church, which covered numerous earlier dwellings, brought with it a comprehensive relocation of the village, thus altering the entire landscape (the redirecting of water courses, the adaptation of the hillsides in the valley by means of the construction of terraces, etc.). In addition to this, in not one of these dwellings have material indications of seigneurial residents who could have been involved in the reordering of the village been identified.

In short, around 950 a profound transformation of the landscape, built environment, and social structure of the village of Zaballa took place, which must be attributed to the actions of *seniores* who did not reside in the village and who were not part of the village community, but did wield sufficient power of coercion so as to be able to remodel the community. We cannot know the instruments and mechanisms by means of which this imposition took place, although perhaps it is not hard to imagine that these elites resorted to the influence of the written word in order to promote and achieve their efforts to impose themselves on the local community.

Santa María de Zornoztegi: The Emergence of Parishes

Many early medieval Alavese villages, however, lacked churches throughout all of the early Middle Ages. Although there are documents which show us that sometimes a single village had several private churches, the classic image that holds that Alavese village life revolved around a (community) church actually belongs more to the period of parish creation that took place in the high Middle Ages. Zornoztegi, situated in the eastern sector of Álava, has been extensively excavated over five years. At this site, which was occupied during the Bronze Age, a small late Roman farm has been identified, which seems to have depended on a larger estate, identifiable — to give one reason among many — due to particular indications of livestock farming. The site was characterized by a period of low intensity occupation during the sixth and seventh centuries, and only towards the eighth did the formation of a true village take place, thanks to increasing occupation levels. In contrast with other earlier settlements (Dulantzi, Aistra, Zaballa), in Zornoztegi there is no archaeological evidence (for example, silos) of clearly defined social differentiation in the heart of the village community, and the village did not have a church throughout the early medieval period.

In the twelfth century a small Romanesque church was built at the northern end of the village, of some fifteen by eight metres, featuring a semicircular apse built with well-cut white limestone ashlar blocks, and in keeping with constructive systems which were common in much of the Alavese region in this period (Figure 2.3). The construction of this church, dedicated to Santa María,



Figure 2.3. Aerial view of the excavation of Zornoztegi. Photograph by Juan Antonio Quirós.

made use of an earlier dwelling and it supposed, in the medium term, a profound reordering of the village space, given that the dwellings were moved and clustered around the church. But in contrast with Zaballa, the parish church was the axis which gave the village coherent shape, not an instrument of domination.

Peasant Churches? Funerals of Peasant Communities

The material identification of churches founded at the instigation of peasant communities is extremely complex due to the absence of explicit supporting documentation in the early Middle Ages. Villamanca is a good example of a peasant or community church which crops up in the Alavese texts, in this case by way of a citation to the hermitage of Pilar del Garísoain at the beginning of the charter in question. However, it has not been possible to identify, in material terms, constructions which can be securely assigned to peasant communities, yet on the other hand, several peasant funerary spaces which lack ecclesiastical buildings have been identified. Authors such as L. Sánchez Zufiaurre have suggested, for example, that these communities could have built their churches in wood or have reused 'cave churches' during the ninth and tenth centuries,⁷⁶ but the truth is that it remains very difficult to confirm this hypothesis.

This situation contrasts, on the other hand, with finds made in the last few years in some parts of the northern peninsula, generally in the context of preventive archaeological interventions. By way of example, in Asturias, churches have been found with their walls intact (Santa María de Arbazal) or identified during excavations (Riomiera, Tina), which, given the characteristics of their construction, their dimension, and the context in which they have been found, have been attributed to the action of peasant communities.⁷⁷ Doubtless one of the most interesting is the small church of Santa María de Arbazal, attributed to the tenth century, which has miraculously been conserved entirely intact because it was integrated within the later parish church.⁷⁸ This begs the question as to whether this apparent asymmetry in the identification of community churches is due to a lack of research in the Álava area.

⁷⁶ Sánchez Zufiaurre, *Técnicas constructivas medievales*, p. 335.

⁷⁷ Quirós Castillo and Fernández Mier, 'Para una historia social de la arquitectura monumental'.

⁷⁸ On the church of Santa María de Arbazal, see García de Castro Valdés, *Arquitectura cristiana de la Alta Edad Media en Asturias*, pp. 392–94.

Conclusion

The dominance of the paradigm of 'repoblación' (re-establishment of population), which characterized much of the historiography on early medieval Álava until well into the 1970s, attributed a central importance to the church as the instrument with which feudal societies were constructed. This paradigm provided an umbrella answer to a multiplicity of theoretical approaches and empirical analyses which nonetheless shared some basic premises.

On the one hand, primitivist conceptions of early medieval Basque society emphasized the insubstantial impact of Romanization in the region, weak demographic pressure, and the survival of pastoral societies, nomadic or semi-nomadic in character, whose roots were prehistoric. This theoretical approach, which can call upon much support,⁷⁹ has been used in both Sánchez Alborno's works of the 1950s and 1960s, which exalted the notion of 'despoblación' (depopulation),⁸⁰ and the *gentilicio* (or kin-based) conception of northern societies formulated by A. Barbero and M. Vigil in the 1960s and 1970s.⁸¹ A second position looked to the rhetorical value of the *presura* in documents, in which churchmen appear as the cultivators of new lands which were previously uninhabited or barren, or as the restorers of ruined churches;⁸² this led authors such as García de Cortázar to develop a model centred on the role played by colonizers, who he saw as the vehicle of 'mediterranean acculturation'.⁸³ In both cases, the construction of rural churches would therefore have been a fundamental instrument in the social organization of space and the introduction of a raft of changes that articulated and shaped the hierarchies of Alavese society.

Advances made in the last decade have undermined the supporting framework upon which these paradigms were based. Archaeology has openly questioned the position that held that the northern peninsula was scarcely Romanized, and the analysis of rural settlements, articulated from the eighth century onwards in village networks, has revealed the complexity of early medieval societies and systems of production. Coming from another angle, histo-

⁷⁹ A critique of some primitivist positions can be found in Azkarate, 'La arqueología y los intereses historiográficos', pp. 35–42.

⁸⁰ Sánchez Alborno, *Despoblación y repoblación del Valle del Duero*.

⁸¹ Barbero and Vigil, *Sobre los orígenes sociales de la Reconquista*.

⁸² The same ideological justifications can be observed in churches of other areas of northern Iberia like Galicia (see José Carlos Sánchez-Pardo's essay in this volume) and the Braga region (Luís Fontes's essay).

⁸³ García de Cortázar, 'La organización del territorio en la formación de Álava y Vizcaya'.

rians such as J. J. Larrea have untangled what once lay hidden behind tales of colonizers and their use of the *presura*, suggesting that in reality these acts consisted of the development of subtle methods of the appropriation of landed resources and of the encroachment of seigneurial interests into already existing local communities, on the back of documents written with the express purpose of legitimizing such appropriation. In fact, it has been possible to verify that a large number of churches documented to the ninth to eleventh centuries were founded in the heart of village communities that already existed, which obliges us to reconsider the status previously afforded to those who exercised the *presura*.

In recent times an authority on this material questioned the interest that investigations could have if centred solely on determining whether the village predated the church or vice versa in any given case. The answer to this question is simple if we analyse the social actors of the processes examined herein, and subject to critical scrutiny paradigms such as ‘repoblación’ and primitivist assumptions. It is beyond doubt that there were communities in Álava, such as that of Villamanca, which founded and built their own churches in the early Middle Ages, but they seem to have been few in number, especially when compared to other regions in the peninsula, such as Asturias or Catalonia. In the majority of cases the founders and owners of churches in the early Middle Ages were powerful people of nonetheless varying influence and prestige: from priests who dominated a village and potentates such as those who controlled Salcedo, to aristocrats such as the family of Don Marcelo, and the agents who bound society together such as bishops and counts. Thus, to ask questions about the driving forces behind these foundations, and to trace their development throughout time as well as the mechanisms with which they controlled these churches, allows us to construct the geography of local power and to analyse the many and complex forms of social interaction that developed thanks to these institutions.

The analysis undertaken in this article has demonstrated that early medieval churches in Álava were intricately bound up with myriad complex political, social, and economic relations. The forms taken by the social hierarchies of the ninth and tenth centuries, much more fluid and localized, help us to explain the consolidation in more delimited spaces of political systems operating on a local scale, which latter developed their spatial and structural dimensions with the genesis of highly politicized power structures: an example being the county of Lantarón and the bishopric of Valpuesta, which appear to be very closely related to the meagre documentation conserved from the century beginning with Avito and ending with the appearance of Fernán González as *comes in*

Lantarón. This was a political and social pre-eminence that did not necessarily have to translate itself into a crushing patrimonial dominance:⁸⁴ in this regard it is surely significant to observe how prelates linked to Valpuesta saw their sphere of activity reduced. Thus, for example, Felmiro, Fredulfo, or Diego acted on a similar scale in the tenth century to that of Avito in the ninth. One could go so far as to affirm that in spatial and functional terms the patrimony of Salcedo is similar to that of Valpuesta. That is to say that the control of an indeterminate number of churches cannot explain, per se, mechanisms of political authority that appear to be linked to ways of social distinction. These are generated by relationships with military power structures, manifested, for example, within the county of Lantarón, whose influence is clearly characterized by a whole series of relations of even greater political scale, from the Asturian monarchy to the county of Castile.

On the other hand, in the Llanada there exists the opportunity for very variable political outcomes in order to underline local power. During the tenth century, a time which appears to have been a key phase in the gradual process of the crystallization of feudal society,⁸⁵ certain powers were already capable of imposing themselves *from without*, such as was the case in Zaballa, where an efficient and heavy rent-collecting apparatus was put in place, or of consolidating forms of territorial domination which were rooted in the distant past, as occurred in the case of Aistra. Once again, one can observe the political capabilities of a governing class closely linked to central power structures, in this case in Pamplona. These capabilities are soon reflected in the documentation by the patrimonial holdings of the families of Navarrese *tenentes*, and they help explain the extension of their landed holdings across much of the centre and east of Álava, where such social processes are less clearly observable in the documentation because this latter emanated directly from the political and religious powers. From the moment in which a strong authority appears to have been operating in this area the documents begin to shed light on its political and social realities. The extent of the patrimony of the Díaz family is simply an example of the new scale of prominence achieved by the 'administrators' of the the Álava region and was itself the result, in turn, of the magnitude acquired by the kingdom from the reign of Sancho III.

⁸⁴ Although his image is substantially conditioned by the nature of the surviving documentation, which is, one ought to remember, highly problematic.

⁸⁵ Quirós Castillo and Santos Salazar, 'I villaggi medievali'.

Thus, even if the domination of a church offered a formidable platform towards social prestige in the village, it remains necessary to analyse the political context in which the different owners of ecclesiastical centres acted. Only then can we arrive at a more detailed understanding of the influence acquired by means of the control of *ecclesiae et monasteria*. The role of the domination of churches in strategies of the construction of political power appears to have been a more sophisticated and less geographically differentiated process than has traditionally been supposed. Likewise, this article has emphasized that the control of grand patrimonial interests did not guarantee, by itself, access to superior scales of political power. From the Bishops of Valpuesta to counts, and from these latter to the *seniores* distinguished in the charters as *tenentes* of the Kingdom of Pamplona, proximity to central structures was fundamental to being able to exercise considerable political weight on a supralocal scale, for this was a political game in which not all the *possessors* of churches could win, but in which the possession of churches was the *sine qua non* in order to be able to play the game in any meaningful way at all.

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LOCAL CHURCHES AND LORDSHIP IN LATE ANTIQUE AND EARLY MEDIEVAL NORTHERN ITALY

Alexandra Chavarría

The Study of Churches in Italy: From Christian Archaeology to the Archaeology of Churches

The secular study of churches in Italy has a long history. Studies of the ‘Christian archaeology school’ have concentrated on the origins and development of Christianization and its absorption into the culture of the late antique period, particularly in Rome and its territory.¹ The application of modern stratigraphic methodologies to churches in Italy began in the 1930s with the excavations of Nino Lamboglia (1912–77) at San Paragorio di Noli in Liguria.² This research, together with investigations beginning in 1958 by Gian Piero Bognetti (1902–63) at Castelseprio after the discovery in 1948 of Santa Maria *foris portas* and followed by Anglo-Italian campaigns,³ continued with the excavations of the monastery of San Salvatore di Brescia.⁴ Since then, research on ecclesiastical

¹ For a history of research, see Saxer, *Cent ans d'archéologie chrétienne*; Brandenburg, ‘Archeologia Cristiana’.

² Lamboglia, ‘Gli scavi di San Paragorio e il problema delle origini di Noli’.

³ Brogiolo and Carver, ‘Castelseprio (Va). 4a campagna di scavo’; Carver, ‘Castelseprio (Varese): Scavi attorno a Santa Maria foris portas’; Brogiolo and Gelichi, *Nuove ricerche sui castelli altomedievali*, pp. 149–57.

⁴ Panazza, ‘Gli scavi, l’architettura e gli affreschi della chiesa di S. Salvatore in Brescia’; Brogiolo, ‘La sequenza altomedievale della cripta di San Salvatore in Brescia’, pp. 35–39; Brogiolo, ‘Gli edifici monastici nelle fasi altomedievali’, pp. 61–70.

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and monastic contexts experienced an extraordinary development, and the number of newly discovered urban and rural churches has grown dramatically. It has completely changed our knowledge of ecclesiastical architecture, widening its chronological span and establishing more accurate chronologies due to the systematic application of rigorous stratigraphic methods and scientific dating techniques to both buried deposits and standing walls. In the last years the quantity and quality of information related to ecclesiastical buildings has been dramatically increasing thanks to the *Corpus Architecturae Religiosae Europaeae* (CARE), coordinated by M. Jurković and G. P. Brogiolo. This project is documenting the whole corpus of late antique and early medieval churches in Europe using consistent methods of analysis and documentation.⁵

Recent discussion has increasingly focused on the beginnings of Christianization in the cities and the development of Christian topography,⁶ the development of the Christian suburb,⁷ the process of Christianization in town and country,⁸ the study of rural churches in relation to settlements,⁹ and the construction of churches as dedicated funerary places.¹⁰ Another topic that has been widely researched in the past decade is the relationship between churches and lordship. Between the fourth and sixth centuries, texts link the prolifera-

⁵ Brogiolo and Jurković, 'Corpus architecturae religiosae europaeae (IV–X saec.)'. The whole volume was devoted to this project. The first volume – relating to northern Italy – has been published as Brogiolo and Ibsen, *Corpus Architecturae Religiosae Europaeae (saec. IV–X): Province di Treviso, Belluno, Padova, Vicenza*. The provinces of Brescia, Trentino, and Verona will soon be published.

⁶ For a recent synthesis with further references, see Cantino Wataghin, 'Christian Topography in the Late Antique Town'.

⁷ Fiocchi Nicolai, *Strutture funerarie ed edifici di culto paleocristiani*; Nieddu, *La basilica apostolorum sulla Via Appia*; with some impressive discoveries such as the basilica in Via Ardeatina by V. Fiocchi Nicolai, and the suburban complex of San Pietro at Canosa: Volpe, 'Architecture and Church Power in Late Antiquity'.

⁸ Pergola, *Alle origini della parrocchia rurale (IV–VII sec.)*; Cantino Wataghin, 'Christianisation et organisation ecclésiastique des campagnes'; Brogiolo, 'S. Stefano di Garlate e la cristianizzazione delle campagne'; Russo and others, *L'edificio battesimale in Italia*; Cantino Wataghin, Fiocchi Nicolai, and Volpe, 'Aspetti della cristianizzazione degli agglomerati secondari'.

⁹ Brogiolo, *Chiese e insediamenti nelle campagne tra V e VI secolo*; Brogiolo and Chavarria, 'Chiese, territorio e dinamiche del popolamento'; Campana and others, *Chiese e insediamenti nei secoli di formazione dei paesaggi medievali della Toscana (V–X secolo)*.

¹⁰ Bierbrauer, 'Langobardische Kirchengraeber'; Lusuadi Siena, Giostra, and Spalla, *Sepulture e luoghi di culto in età longobarda*; Brogiolo, 'Oratori funerari tra VII e VIII secolo nella campagne transpadane'.



Map 3.1. Location map of the study area: northern Italy.
Map by José Carlos Sánchez-Pardo using Demis WMS World Map.

tion of churches in the landscape to the initiative of rich landowners to whom bishops delegated the responsibility of Christianizing the countryside.¹¹ In the later period (seventh–eighth centuries), the diffusion of private funerary churches has been seen as a tool of the early medieval aristocracies for displaying social and political status.¹² Without underestimating the role of aristocrats in the proliferation of churches, this research underestimates the role of the

¹¹ Cantino Wataghin, 'Christianisation et organisation ecclésiastique des campagnes', among many others.

¹² La Rocca, 'Le aristocrazie e le loro chiese tra VIII e IX secolo'.

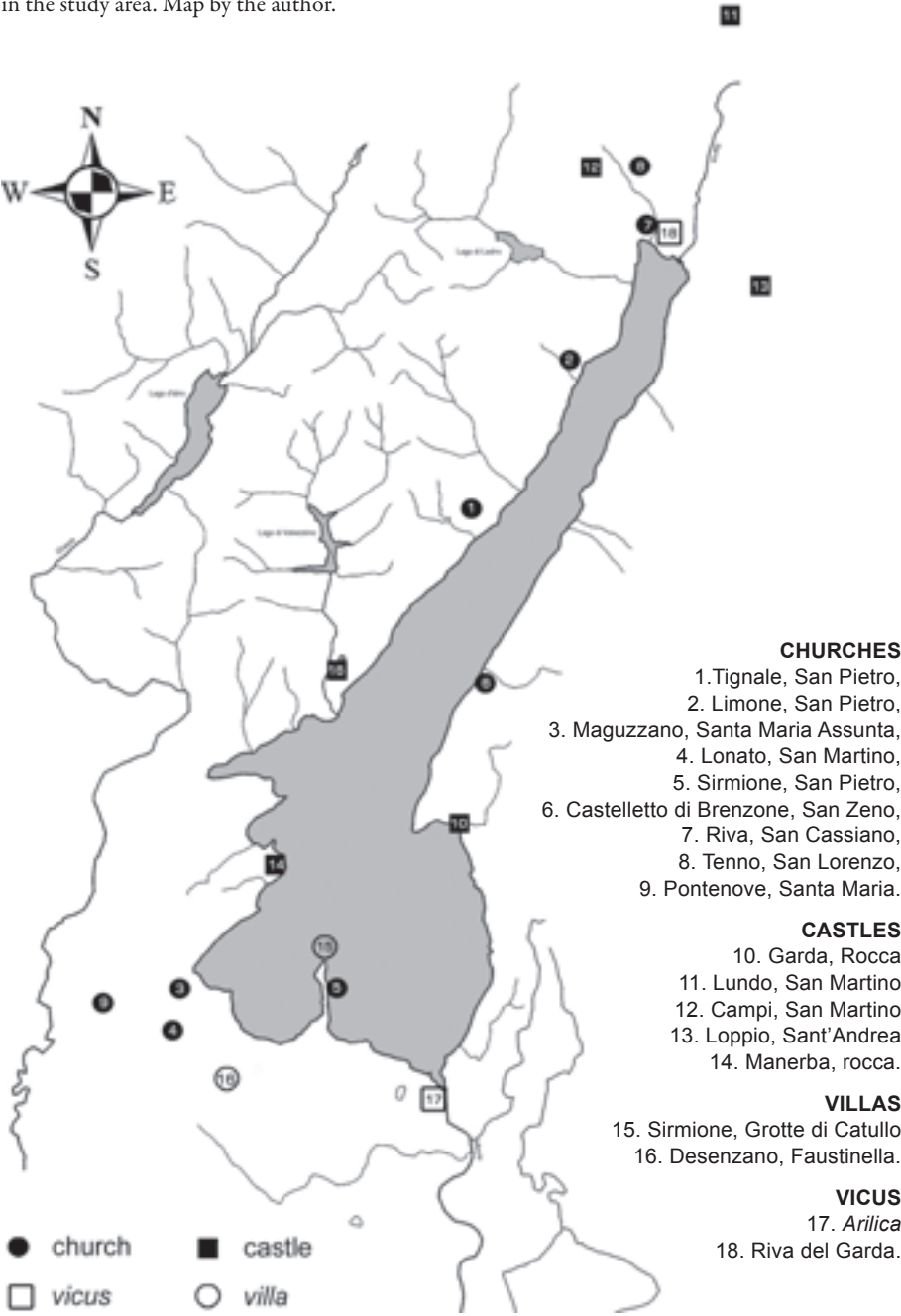
ecclesiastical authorities in the process of Christianization. Even if churches had a variety of functions, and sometimes also a variety of patrons, they were primarily agents of Christianization of the landscape. This is particularly true for churches endowed with baptismal facilities, a role that was inextricably linked to the bishops and their delegated ministers in the countryside. In the late antique period, churches were not primarily placed in private ownership but were directly built in relationship with wider settlements (*vici* or *castra*), some in the form of baptismal churches and others in order to Christianize communal funerary areas. Furthermore, archaeology shows how difficult it is to link the functioning villas of the late Roman aristocracy with the construction of churches. Many churches are related to Roman structures, but excavation shows that they were already abandoned.¹³ Many later churches were surely built by local elites, often as dedicated places of burial. However, as some written sources reveal, churches continued to be built by a heterogeneous group of patrons to serve different functions: pastoral care, as funerary places, for the monastic control of a territory, or — in the case of royal foundations — for political advantage.

The object of this paper is to show the complexity of the ecclesiastical network of churches in the countryside, analysing the functions, jurisdictions, and interrelations of these buildings through time. This comprehensive approach is the only methodology that can satisfactorily explore why churches were built in certain places, what their functions were, whom they served, and who built them, as well as the relationship between these churches and the economic, social, and political landscape to which they belonged. Such a study can only be accomplished if it is limited to a restricted territory — in this case the region of Lake Garda in northern Italy (Map 3.1) — taking into account the interaction of churches with the evolution of the territory and the transformation of settlement patterns.¹⁴

¹³ For northern Italy, see Chavarría Arnau, 'Churches and Villas in the Fifth Century'. Many churches traditionally considered to be contemporary to residential villas are instead mausolea or were built at a later date; cf. Chavarría Arnau, 'Splendida sepulcra ut posterius audiant'.

¹⁴ The methodology followed in this kind of research has been developed by Gian Pietro Brogiolo in the last decade in the northern Garda (Brogiolo and others, *Chiese dell'Alto Garda bresciano*; Brogiolo, 'Dall'Archeologia dell'architettura all'Archeologia della complessità') and the territory of southern Trentino (Brogiolo, 'Le chiese del Sommolago').

Map 3.2. Locations of the main churches in the study area. Map by the author.



*Churches in a Changing Landscape:
The Garda Region in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*

Thanks to more than forty years of archaeological research,¹⁵ the characteristics and evolution of rural settlements in the region of Lake Garda between late antiquity and the early Middle Ages is well known (Map 3.2). On the basis of the archaeological data, the fifth century appears to have been a time of fundamental importance for the evolution of the countryside in this area.¹⁶ Late antique villas, not the sole but the most characteristic type of settlement, show dramatic transformations in the course of the fifth century.¹⁷ Although research during recent decades has focused on the problem of the end of these late antique villas, no definitive answer has been given to explain these changes. Interpretations range from a slow decline in the living standards of the late Roman elites — who appear to have continued living in these buildings — to an abandonment and reoccupation by other kinds of settlers such as dependent or free farmers or new barbarian populations.¹⁸ The answer to the questions of what happened to late antique villas and who lived in them during the fifth to seventh centuries is crucial to this paper, given that one of the most established interpretations concerning the construction of the first churches in the countryside links to villas and their aristocratic owners.

In the case of the Garda territory, the first point to note (and to which we will later return) is that, archaeologically, the number of churches built upon late antique residential villas is very small and many well-studied late antique residential villas did not develop churches. Most of the villas seem to have been abandoned and crudely transformed in the course of the fifth century, showing dramatic changes of function with the presence of tombs,¹⁹ productive struc-

¹⁵ Brogiolo, 'Problemi della Romanizzazione nella Riviera bresciana'; Brogiolo, *Architetture medievali del Garda bresciano*; Brogiolo, *Il territorio gardesano tra età Romana e alto medioevo*; Brogiolo, *Le fortificazioni del Garda e i sistemi di difesa dell'Italia settentrionale*; Gheroldi and Ibsen, 'Insediamenti rupestri nell'Alto Garda bresciano'; Brogiolo, Ibsen, and Malaguti, *Archeologia a Garda (1998–2003)*; Brogiolo, *Nuove ricerche sulle chiese altomedievali del Garda*.

¹⁶ Brogiolo and Chavarria Arnau, *Aristocrazie e campagne nell'Occidente da Costantino a Carlo Magno*.

¹⁷ Brogiolo, 'Continuità fra tarda antichità e altomedioevo'.

¹⁸ See Chavarria Arnau, *El final de las villas en Hispania (siglos IV–VII)* for a wide analysis of the different processes that archaeology can document and their various interpretations.

¹⁹ For Desenzano and Grote di Catullo, see Bolla, 'Le necropoli delle ville Romane di Desenzano e Sirmione'.

tures in residential areas,²⁰ and clear evidence of the exploitation of pavements and wall revetments at Faustinella and Castelleto di Brenzone, among others. In the majority of cases it seems impossible to imagine that the customs of the aristocratic owners changed so much that they were happy to exchange baths and mosaics for earth floors and rubbish, so it is more appropriate to think of a change of inhabitants for these buildings. Questions that remain open are whether the rural property on which these villas were built was still functioning and who owned it. These questions can only be answered with a *longue durée* perspective on the study of landscape transformation. As we will see in this paper, the study of the churches that were built in these early medieval properties could also be a key to answer some of these questions.

While villas were being abandoned or transformed, another settlement process took place in the same territory: the emergence of a great number of fortified settlements called *castella* or *castra*.²¹ Recent studies have shown that these fortified settlements were part of a wider military system composed of castles, towers, and barrage systems to control and defend the Lake Garda region.²²

An interesting *castrum* within the Lake Garda region is the fabulous villa of Grotte di Catullo, in the Sirmione Peninsula, which developed during the fourth century into a military settlement as shown by a wall 2.5 km long and some military objects found within.²³ The strategic importance of this place is documented by the settlement of groups of Goths at the end of the fifth century and Lombards at the end of the sixth century, some of whom were buried inside the church of San Pietro in Mavinas, as discussed below. The presence of a relevant settlement at this site is attested at the end of the sixth century by the Anonimo Ravennate, who describes it as a *civitas* in his *Cosmographia* (IV, 36).²⁴ During the eighth century the settlement is termed in various documents as a *castrum*,²⁵ and sources dating from 774 onwards refer to its status as

²⁰ For Faustinella, see Roffia, *Dalla villa Romana all'abitato altomedievale*.

²¹ A similar process of the creation of fortifications in south-eastern France is studied by Christine Delaplace in this volume.

²² Brogiolo, 'Dati archeologici e beni fiscali', pp. 94–99.

²³ Roffia, 'Le fortificazioni di Sirmione'.

²⁴ The *Cosmographia* or *Ravenatis Anonymi Cosmographia* is an anonymous description of the geography of the late Roman world, which includes a long list of more than five thousand place names and roads. It was probably first written in Greek and probably contains later medieval interpolations. Schnetz, *Ravenatis anonymi Cosmographia*.

²⁵ First notice 765; cf. Brogiolo, 'Civitas, chiese e monasteri', pp. 17–19.

iudiciaria, that is, as an autonomous place governed by a royal agent. Its public character seems to have continued until Charlemagne donated the whole island *cum castello sermionense* to the monastery of San Martin of Tours.²⁶

The same Anonimo Ravennate also mentions the *castrum* of *Garada*, identified with the archaeological site of Garda, several kilometres north of Sirmione on the Veronese side of the lake. Archaeological evidence indicates that this *castrum* was founded in the fifth century, when a fortification and a church were built.²⁷ A sixth-century chronology has been proposed for the *castrum* of Monte Castello di Gaino located on the western side of the lake.²⁸ The area north of the lake (the modern province of Trentino) also experienced intensive fortification during the fifth and sixth centuries, archaeologically attested at San Martino di Lundo, San Martino di Campi, and Sant'Andrea di Loppio, and through wider study of the territory involving aerial photography and Lidar, followed by fieldwalking and the analysis of textual and cartographical evidence.²⁹

Many of the mentioned *castra* were founded during the fifth century during the fortification of the Alps under the late Roman State. Others were initiated in the following centuries by the Gothic authorities or Byzantine troops. Many were later still occupied by Lombard soldiers defending the territory against the Franks.³⁰ Archaeological evidence (in the form of defensive and residential architecture, imported ceramics, and coins) reveals continuity of occupation of these sites throughout the early Middle Ages, and the presence of elites inside them. The majority of these *castra* were endowed with a church.

Turning to rural settlement more generally, we at present have limited archaeological information about its evolution later in the early medieval period. Nothing is known about the continuity of larger settlements of Roman origin, or the creation of new settlements. Some *castra* probably continued to be occupied during the seventh–eighth centuries and the written sources (as we will later see) mention rural properties — called *curtes* — belonging to the Lombard elites. This confirms the survival of dispersed settlements of aristocratic character in this later period, even if we still do not know archaeologically what these *curtes* look like.

²⁶ Brogiolo, 'Civitas, chiese e monasteri'.

²⁷ Brogiolo, 'Fortificazioni e insediamenti nel territorio gardesano'.

²⁸ Brogiolo and others, 'La fortificazione altomedievale del Monte Castello di Gaino (Bs)'.

²⁹ Brogiolo, 'Introduzione'.

³⁰ Brogiolo, 'Fortificazioni e militarizzazione della società'.



In the light of this research, the foundation of rural churches during the fifth to eighth centuries, whether in *castra*, *villas*, *curtes*, or elsewhere, should be investigated in the light of wider processes affecting settlements, and the social and economic structures with which they were intimately connected. Archaeology shows that the construction of churches follows the evolution of rural settlement and that it was carried out on the sites of agglomerated settlements (*vici* and *castra*), in relation to road systems and, to a much lesser degree, to late antique villas.

Figure 3.1. Baptismal font from the church of Santa Maria at Pontenove di Bedizzole. Source: Breda and Venturini, 'La pieve di Pontenove di Bedizzole (Bs)'.

The Development of the Church Network in the Garda Territory

Chronologies

No absolute chronology can be given to any of the late antique churches of the Garda region, but relative chronologies indicate that the first churches post-date the end of the fifth century. A date of *c.* 500 has been proposed for the church of Santa Maria at Pontenove di Bedizzole,³¹ which has a mosaic-paved baptismal font in its northern annex. This is confirmed by a brick stamp whose text (DE BALBIANO / IN[diction] XII/ P[er] ROMULUM LEC[torem]) suggests that it came from an ecclesiastical *figlina* or office that produced the building material for the construction of churches in town and country, perhaps Brescia where a brick with an identical trademark was found in the cathedral (Figures 3.1 and 3.2, no. 1).³² At San Pietro in

³¹ Breda and Venturini, 'La pieve di Pontenove di Bedizzole (Bs)'.

³² Breda, 'Archeologia degli edifici di culto di età medievale nella diocesi di Brescia. Atlante', pp. 247–48; Sannazaro, 'Un laterizio bollato'.

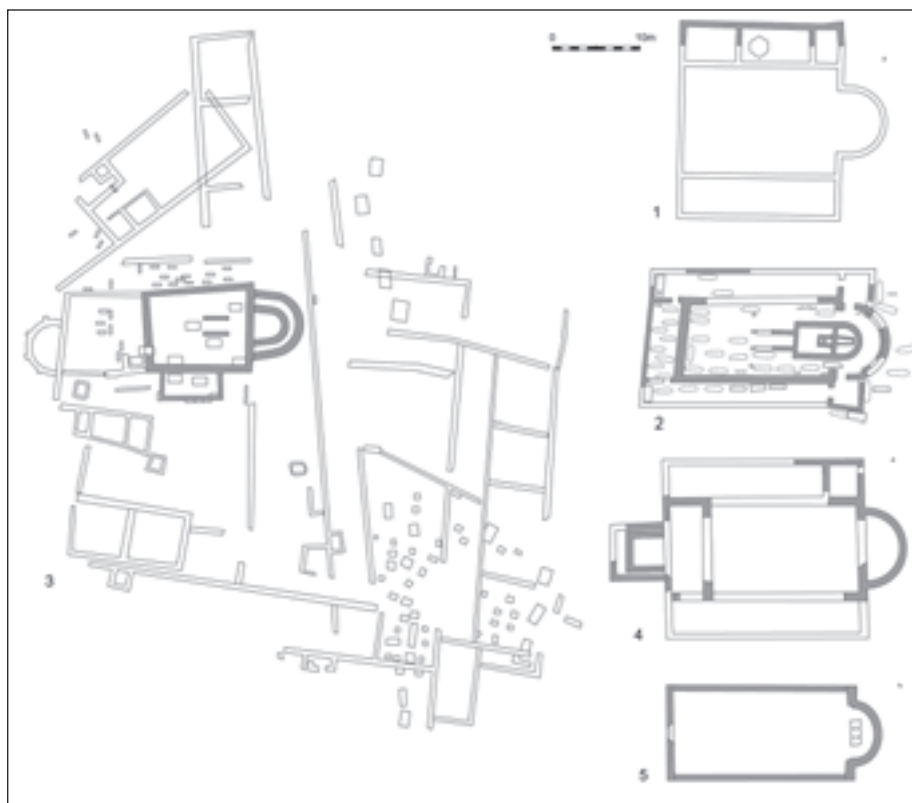


Figure 3.2. Church plans: 1) Santa Maria at Pontenove di Bedizzole; 2) San Pietro in Mavinas; 3) San Cassiano at Riva del Garda; 4) San Lorenzo di Desenzano; 5) San Lorenzo di Tenno. Plans by Paolo Vedovetto.

Mavinas³³ (Sirmione) (Figure 3.2, no. 2), the *terminus ante quem* of a brooch found in one of the tombs has been used to date the construction of the church to *c.* 500. A similar chronology has been proposed for the church of San Cassiano at Riva del Garda³⁴ (Figure 3.2, no. 3) based upon a funerary inscription dated 24 December 539, which refers to a burial in a tomb with a previous deposition (*positus super Cabriolo*).³⁵ No dating materials were found dur-

³³ Breda and others, 'San Pietro in Mavinas a Sirmione'.

³⁴ Bassi, 'La chiesa dei santi Cassiano'.

³⁵ *Hic in pac(e) r(equiescit) | Ianuarius q(ui) v(ixit) an(nos) | LVI r(e)c(e)s(sit) VIII K(a) l(endas) | Ianu(aria) Indi(ctione) III p(ost) c(onsulatum) | Iohannes v(iri) c(larissimi) c(on)s(ulis) | Positus super | Cabriolo | 24 dicembre 539 d.C.*

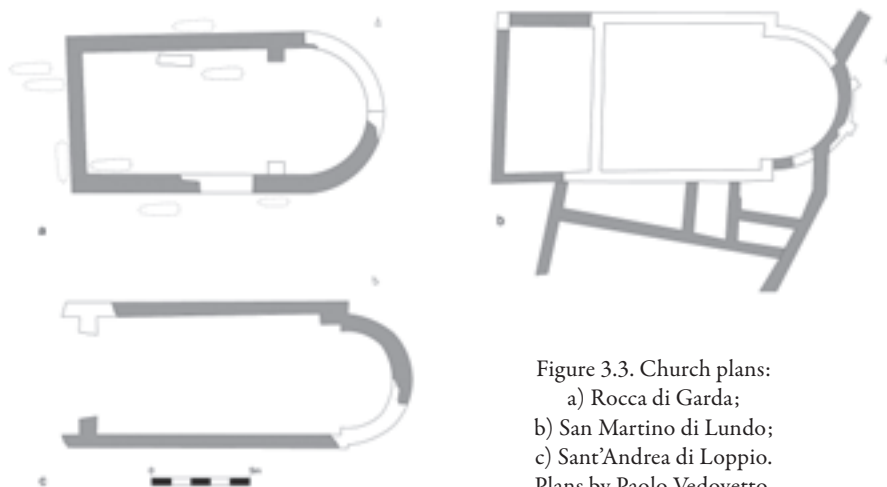


Figure 3.3. Church plans:
 a) Rocca di Garda;
 b) San Martino di Lundo;
 c) Sant'Andrea di Loppio.
 Plans by Paolo Vedovetto.

ing the excavations in the church of San Lorenzo di Desenzano³⁶ (Figure 3.2, no. 4), the chronology of which has been hypothesized on the basis of the similarity of plan and metrology to the churches of Santa Maria at Pontenove di Bedizzole and San Pietro in Mavinas at the end of the fifth century. Similar considerations serve to give a provisory date for the church of San Lorenzo di Tenno (Figure 3.2, no. 5), which has been the object of a still unpublished stratigraphic analysis of its standing walls by G. P. Brogiolo.³⁷ A late fifth-century date has been attributed to the small church of the Garda *castrum*, based upon a fragment of mosaic pavement from its presbytery (Figure 3.3, part a).³⁸

Castrum churches were generally built contemporary with, or shortly after, the construction of these settlements. At the *castrum* of Lundo, for example, the church of San Martino is dated to the fifth or sixth centuries (1560±30 BP) thanks to ¹⁴C analysis of two burials from within (Figure 3.3, part b).³⁹ A similar date can probably be given to the first church constructed at the *castrum* of San Martino di Campi.⁴⁰ The paucity of firm dates is due to the scarcity of

³⁶ Chavarriá Arnau, 'La chiesa tardoantica di San Lorenzo di Desenzano'.

³⁷ For some preliminary conclusions on Brogiolo's analysis, see Vedovetto, 'Spolia carolingie nella chiesa di San Lorenzo a Tenno (Th)'.

³⁸ Brogiolo, Ibsen, and Malaguti, *Archeologia a Garda (1998–2003)*.

³⁹ Cavada and Forte, 'Progetto "Monte San Martino/Lundo-Lomaso"'.

⁴⁰ Bellosi, Granata, and Pisu, 'La chiesa dell'abitato in altura'.



Figure 3.4. Church plans:
 1) San Pietro di Tignale;
 2) San Zeno de l'Oselet;
 3) San Martino di Lonato;
 4) San Pietro di Limone;
 5) Santa Maria Assunta di Maguzzano.
 Plans by Paolo Vedovetto.

dateable material from the foundation levels of these churches. It is therefore extremely important to apply scientific dating techniques, for instance to mortar, to get a firm date for the construction of these churches.

All these late antique churches remained in continuous use during the following centuries. This is shown by architectural changes (the adding of a monumental baptistery in front of the facade of Santa Maria di Pontenove and a similar structure — although no basin has been found — at San Lorenzo di Desenzano) and the existence of liturgical decorated furnishings dating from the eighth century (San Lorenzo di Tenno, San Pietro in Mavinas, San Lorenzo di Desenzano, among others). Some of these churches were used continuously for burial throughout the early Middle Ages (for example, San Pietro in Mavinas or San Lorenzo di Desenzano).

New churches were also built in the Garda region from the seventh to the ninth centuries. At San Pietro di Tignale (Figure 3.4, no. 1) grave goods from

one of the two tombs located inside the church give a *terminus ante quem* date of the mid-seventh century.⁴¹ At Castelletto di Brenzone, a church devoted to San Zeno de l'Oselet was constructed in the seventh century inside the area of a Roman villa (Figure 3.4, no. 2).⁴² San Martino di Lonato has been archaeologically dated to the eighth century (Figure 3.4, no. 3).⁴³ At San Pietro di Limone, sculptural finds indicate an eighth- or ninth-century date for the construction of the church (Figure 3.4, no. 4).⁴⁴ Sculptural finds and the stratigraphic sequence date the church discovered in the cloister of the abbey of Santa Maria Assunta di Maguzzano to the eighth or ninth centuries (Figure 3.4, no. 5).⁴⁵

This rich picture of rural churches is only a small reflection of the real quantity of churches that existed in this — and other — regions. In many apparently later churches, the presence of early medieval sculpture, the identification of portions of walls showing early medieval construction techniques, and church dedications can indicate a late antique or early medieval origin.⁴⁶ In other churches the fortuitous discovery of early medieval graves — sometimes aligned with the walls of the church — indicates that the building already existed at that time.

Having outlined the existence of such an abundance of religious buildings in the Garda region, we must now ask why they were built, how they were used, and who was responsible for their construction.

Functions and Patrons of the Garda Churches

Little research has been undertaken into the functions, jurisdictions, and inter-relations of the Garda churches. Written sources make it clear that ecclesiastical authorities differentiated between different types of church, which had different functions and related to each other and to their surrounding territories and settlement structures in quite different ways. This is a problematic subject for the following reasons:

⁴¹ Brogiolo, *Archeologia e storia della chiesa di San Pietro di Tignale*.

⁴² Bruno and Tremolada, 'Castelletto di Brenzone'.

⁴³ Brogiolo and others, 'La chiesa di San Martino di Lonato (Brescia)'.

⁴⁴ Chavarría Arnau, *La chiesa di San Pietro di Limone*.

⁴⁵ Chavarría Arnau, 'Monastero altomedievale di Maguzzano'.

⁴⁶ For further on these matters, see Brogiolo, 'La costruzione della rete ecclesiastica nel Sommolago'. For the eastern side of the lake, see Ibsen, 'Lineamenti per un contesto'.

- Each church, particularly when first constructed, could have a variety of functions, for example as a place of Christian assembly, for pastoral care, as a funerary chapel, or for a saint's cult.
- Liturgical elements such as baptisteries may have been constructed from perishable materials, obscuring important functions of a church.
- The function of a church may change through time: a baptismal church could lose its baptistery, or a private church be transformed into a parish church.

*The Late Antique Ecclesiastical Network:
Private Patronage or Ecclesiastical Initiative?*

In the late antique period, the proliferation of churches in the countryside is traditionally linked to the initiative of rich landowners.⁴⁷ Christian sources from the late fourth and fifth centuries condemn the celebration of sacrifices and divination rites and the worship of pagan gods and complain of the indifference of urban aristocracies towards the pagan practices of the rural population. These have been used to prove that the bishops delegated the Christianization of the countryside to aristocratic elites. These sources mention the names of aristocrats who undertook the construction of churches on their estates at the end of the fourth century.⁴⁸

Contrary to this established model, the archaeological evidence concerning the foundation of late antique churches on the site of functioning residential villas is scanty.⁴⁹ Textual sources mention private spaces in aristocratic dwell-

⁴⁷ See among others Cantino Wataghin, 'Christianisation et organisation ecclésiastique des campagnes', p. 216; Ibsen, 'Lineamenti per un contesto', p. 245.

⁴⁸ The classical example is that of Sulpicius Severus, a Gallic aristocrat friend of the Bishop Paulinus of Nola who, between the end of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century, built two churches and a baptistery in the countryside around Toulouse (Paulinus of Nola, *Epistulae* XXX, XXXI, XXXII). In Italy, the *Liber Pontificalis* records the foundation of the church of S. Stephen by the pious lady Demetrias, on whose property the church was erected. The same *Liber Pontificalis* describes the foundation and endowment of a church in 471 by the Gothic military officer Flavius Valila, on his domain near Tibur. Valila provided it with the resources necessary for its illumination and for the maintenance of the clergy; see my critical analysis of these texts in relation to archaeological evidence: Chavarria Arnau, 'Churches and Villas in the Fifth Century'.

⁴⁹ For a broader analysis, see Chavarria Arnau, 'Churches and Villas in the Fifth Century'.

ings, termed *oratoria* or *oracula*.⁵⁰ As places where people prayed individually, these oratories did not need a particular structure or furnishings, which would explain why they have yet to be identified archaeologically. At the villa of Desenzano del Garda, for example, it has been suggested that a large room with an *opus sectile* pavement may have been an oratory due to the presence of an apse, a burial, and a glass vessel bearing Christian iconography.⁵¹ Alternatively, however, this room may simply have been a reflection of the Christian faith of the lord or his expression of a particular cultural milieu.⁵²

Although churches were sometimes built in the Garda region on the sites of existing Roman structures,⁵³ we cannot always assume that these were villas and not some other kind of public building such as a *mansio*. We also cannot assume that churches were founded through private patronage rather than as a result of ecclesiastical initiative. Furthermore, in the majority of cases when the church was built (at the end of the fifth century at the earliest), the Roman buildings already seem to have been abandoned by their late antique proprietors. Instead, the majority of the fifth- and sixth-century churches mentioned above were built in relation to *castra* (Sirmione, Garda, Campi, Lundo), to the road network (Santa Maria di Pontenove, San Lorenzo di Desenzano, San Lorenzo di Tenno), or in the suburbs of *vici* (Riva). Churches built over Roman structures generally identified as villas have a much later chronology (generally seventh century or later), by which time villas had been abandoned and timber dwellings built in their place. A sequence of this kind can be traced at Manerba del Garda, where a church preceding the Romanesque parish was erected in the surroundings of a villa already occupied by a later settlement of wooden buildings.⁵⁴ In this example (as in other similar examples in the Garda and adjacent territories)⁵⁵ the church was probably associated with early medieval occupa-

⁵⁰ See the analysis of textual evidence related to the spiritual activity of aristocracies in Bowes, *Private Worship, Public Values, and Religious Change*.

⁵¹ Mirabella Roberti, 'Daniela Scagliarini Corlaita', p. 55.

⁵² For detail of the large diffusion of vessels with biblical iconography produced during late antiquity, see Painter, 'A Roman Silver Jug with Biblical Scenes'.

⁵³ These churches include Santa Maria di Manerba, San Emiliano and San Cassiano di Padenghe, Santa Maria di Pontenove, Santa Maria di Corticelle at Dello, San Salvatore di Saiano, and Cisano, among others. At Desenzano and Toscolano, settlements with churches were also built in areas where Roman villas had existed.

⁵⁴ Carver, Massa, and Brogiolo, 'Sequenza insediativa Romana e altomedievale'.

⁵⁵ See later Castelletto di Brenzone or (in the inner territory of Brescia province) San Bartolomeo di Bornato (Cazzago, Bs): Breda and Venturini, 'Cazzago San Martino (Bs)'.

tion of the existing Roman buildings,⁵⁶ whether ruinous or upstanding, and thus a direct relationship between the church and the aristocratic owner of the late antique villa is archaeologically unsupportable.

The same sequence can be traced for the church of San Zeno de l'Oselet, adjacent to Castelletto di Brenzone on the eastern side of Lake Garda.⁵⁷ At this site, a seventh-century church was built over a series of monumental Roman structures dating from the Augustan or Julio-Claudian periods and occupied until the late fourth or early fifth centuries. These structures subsequently underwent a systematic spoliation of pavements and decorations,⁵⁸ after which occurred layers with material dating to the late fifth or early sixth centuries within their rooms. Overlying this, a multiple stratification of organic layers, as well as artisanal activities, has been identified,⁵⁹ indicating that life continued inside the different rooms of the building. Although the researchers insist that 'the context does not seem to fit with the cases of reoccupied villas for functional activities',⁶⁰ it seems to me that the sequence attested at Castelletto is identical to that attested in the majority of late antique villas in the western Roman Empire: aristocratic life until the end of the fifth century, abandonment or change of inhabitants (in this case clearly shown by the systematic spoliation of pavements and wall revetments), and the instigation of new ways of life inside the building, where heated spaces with mosaic floors give way to 'dark earth', hearths, and metallurgical activities. I do not see how we can be certain that in this condition the building (and the church built upon it in the seventh century) was built by the aristocratic owner of the villa. It is more probable that the church was built by the new owner of this property, but without any written source we cannot be sure whether he was a member of the Lombard elite, an ecclesiastical figure, or something else.

⁵⁶ On this topic, see Anne Nissen's contribution to this volume on churches founded over Roman villas in northern France.

⁵⁷ Bruno and Tremolada, 'Castelletto di Brenzone'.

⁵⁸ 'Abbastanza sistematico risulta comunque lo spoglio dei rivestimenti pavimentali e degli elementi decorativi, con diverse evidenze di reimpiego, in alcune strutture, di elementi architettonici della villa stessa, per lo più soglie e stipiti in calcare ammonitico locale': Bruno and Tremolada, 'Castelletto di Brenzone', p. 88.

⁵⁹ 'I livelli campionati sono da interpretare come l'esito di attività di tipo domestico, da ricollegare per lo più ad azioni di spargimento di materiali derivanti da combustione e focolari': Bruno and Tremolada, 'Castelletto di Brenzone', p. 93.

⁶⁰ Bruno and Tremolada, 'Castelletto di Brenzone', p. 96.

In the case of the church of San Cassiano,⁶¹ north of the village of Riva, it is certain that there were a series of Roman buildings with agricultural functions in the place where the church was built *c.* 500. These Roman agricultural buildings were curated and used throughout the early Middle Ages in a manner different to a traditional Roman villa. Brogiolo has recently hypothesized that the church was built in relation to an early medieval fiscal farm (*curtis regia*).⁶² Osteological study of the eight tombs from within the church, which also date to *c.* 500, shows that the occupants were all males who may have frequently ridden horses and used weapons. Their life span was estimated at about forty-seven years.⁶³ With this data, it is difficult to agree with the excavator's conclusion that the church was a family burial chapel.

Many late antique churches have architectural, liturgical, and funerary indications that they were public enterprises, probably linked to the ecclesiastical hierarchy. At Santa Maria di Pontenove, the presence of a monumental baptistery, a location by the road network, and building materials, including the stamped brick mentioned above, all link this church to an ecclesiastical initiative. Other examples are San Pietro in Mavinas and San Cassiano at Riva, which are unusual in having been extensively internally excavated, and which show complex internal liturgical arrangements. They each have a semicircular exempt seat (*synthronos*), a monumental *reliquarium* probably linked to an elevated area in front of the *synthronos*, and a central corridor leading to the nave. In recent years, these kinds of structures have been widely identified in north Italian churches. Their primary function has been suggested as a clergy bench, and thus it is assumed that a church with a *synthronos* hosted a consistent number of priests. Another characteristic of the *synthronos* is that it is frequently related to a monumental reliquary. We do not know exactly what these liturgical arrangements were for, although they are likely to have been related to important relics. Nevertheless, it is difficult to link their monumentality to private enterprise. Both San Pietro and San Cassiano were used as a burial place for a limited, male, demographic indicative of reserved rather than family burial. The internal arrangements and funerary use of other churches in the study region is unknown, but a funerary use of their immediate surroundings and annexes appears to be general.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Bassi, 'La chiesa dei santi Cassiano ed Ippolito'.

⁶² Brogiolo, 'Paesaggi medievali del Sommolago'.

⁶³ Amoretti, 'San Cassiano nel popolamento della piana di Riva'.

⁶⁴ On the funerary use of the Garda churches, see Chavarría Arnau, 'Cimiteri altomedievali'.

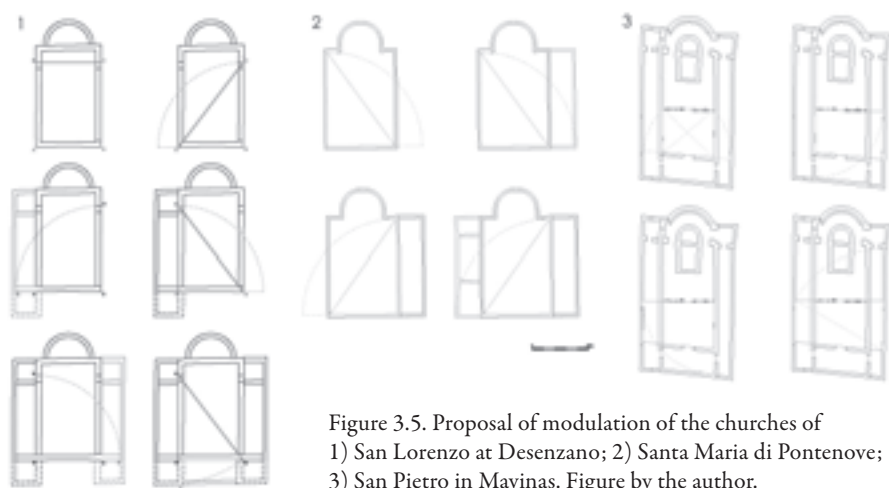


Figure 3.5. Proposal of modulation of the churches of
1) San Lorenzo at Desenzano; 2) Santa Maria di Pontenove;
3) San Pietro in Mavinas. Figure by the author.

Santa Maria di Pontenove, San Lorenzo at Desenzano, San Pietro in Mavinas, and San Lorenzo di Tenno share similar plans (large rectangular naves with side annexes and a semicircular apse) and similar dimensions and seem also to have been constructed following the same metrological formulae (Figure 3.5).⁶⁵ These coincidences make it difficult to hypothesize a number of private patrons autonomously building churches and point instead to a general Christianization of this territory led by the ecclesiastic authorities.

Consolidating the Network of Churches in the Early Middle Ages

The situation changed from the seventh century onwards, when an important number of new churches were built in the Garda region. Most of these new churches are smaller, rarely have lateral annexes (a common characteristic of late antique buildings), and show simpler liturgical arrangements, although they were usually — especially from the eighth century onwards — endowed with decorated stone liturgical furnishings.⁶⁶

Archaeologically, the characteristics of these small, rather simple churches and the absence of baptismal facilities point to a private initiative. Many of these churches were used as funerary places although the lack of anthropological analysis and of extensive excavation around the buildings makes it difficult

⁶⁵ Chavarria Arnau, 'La chiesa tardoantica di San Lorenzo di Desenzano'.

⁶⁶ Ibsen, 'Lineamenti per un contesto'.

to assess the character of the cemetery. At San Pietro di Tignale, for example, two tombs were found inside the church, both close to the main entrance. At both San Zeno de l'Oselet and San Pietro di Limone, the tombs were placed both within and outside the church building.⁶⁷ At San Pietro di Limone, the later chronology of the church (probably ninth century) could explain the absence of tombs inside the building, which can be related to restrictions on the construction of private funerary churches following the Carolingian conquest of 774.⁶⁸ It is, however, more difficult to explain those churches of the seventh and eighth centuries — before these Carolingian restrictions on private funerary churches were imposed — which nevertheless do not appear to have been used for burial.⁶⁹

Historians have also underlined the relationship between these seventh- to eighth-century churches and the local elites who built them for their devotional needs as well as for the display of social status.⁷⁰ As Cristina La Rocca has stated, this shows 'a growing expansive activity in the core of rural elites of the Lombard reign', and their primary function would be the affirmation of the family group through their funerary role.⁷¹ A further step has been recently proposed by I. Barbiera, who sees the construction of these churches specifically as an expression of the political will of the local aristocracies.⁷² This assumption is too generic and must be measured in relationship with each church and its eventual founder: it could be more applicable for the highest levels of power, such as Lombard kings or high court functionaries,⁷³ but it is unprovable for the majority of churches built in this period, not least because we rarely know who built them. In the case of local owners it is difficult to assume what kind of particular 'political' role they played in their milieux, and therefore how they could use the construction of a church for this 'political' will. I think that

⁶⁷ One of these tombs, built during the construction of the church and containing a male skeleton, with gold wires and a small metal reliquary, may be identified as a founder's burial: Chavarría Arnau, *La chiesa di San Pietro di Limone sul Garda*.

⁶⁸ Brogiolo, 'Oratori funerari tra VII e VIII secolo'.

⁶⁹ Settia, 'Pievi e cappelle nella dinamica del popolamento rurale', p. 447.

⁷⁰ Settia, 'Pievi e cappelle nella dinamica del popolamento rurale', p. 447.

⁷¹ La Rocca, 'Le aristocrazie e le loro chiese', pp. 60–62, and Barbiera, *Memorie sepolte*.

⁷² Barbiera, *Memorie sepolte*, p. 197: 'Le chiese in quanto centri polifunzionali di mediazione politica e sociale divennero anche luoghi privilegiati di memoria, e di conseguenza anche di sepultura'.

⁷³ For more on this subject (in particular, the political meaning of Lombard churches at the end of the eighth century), see the paper by Gian Pietro Brogiolo in this volume.

social-economic display is a more likely interpretation for these churches than it is for early medieval grave-goods.

A documentary source of great relevance to this question, which reveals the complexity of functions, patrons, and relationships related to churches at this time, is the so-called 'dispute' between the Bishops of Arezzo and Siena (Tuscany), a collection of documents dating from the mid-seventh to the early eighth centuries.⁷⁴ They describe the conflict between the bishops for the control of nineteen parishes that lay in the jurisdiction of Siena but that were administered by the Bishop of Arezzo. The 'dispute', which as a collection of legal documents is probably precise in its vocabulary, refers to these churches using the words *ecclesia*, *basilica*, *baptisterium*, *monasterium*, and *oratorium* or *oraculum*. *Ecclesia* and *basilica* were synonyms, *baptisterium* clearly refers to churches endowed with a baptistery, whilst *oratorium* always denotes simpler buildings, generally dependent on another church.

These documents reveal the extent to which the ecclesiastic network had established itself in this area at this time. As in most parts of Italy, this was the result of a patronage trend developed on three different levels:

- the local level, at which members of the community acted both singly and collectively;
- the level of the civil and episcopal government of Siena; and
- eventually, for some enterprises, the level of the Lombard king himself.

One passage of a 'dispute' document of 715, which refers to an earlier period, describes for example the construction by 'men of Siena' of a church dedicated to Sant'Ansano (the patron of Siena) in the place they lived: *fecerunt sibi basilica*. The construction was imposed by the civil authority of Siena in order to substitute another church — San Felice in the diocese of Chiusi — previously frequented by those men. The Bishop of Siena built a baptistery in the church of San Ansano and installed a priest in place of an existing priest, although the latter denounced the fact that the new priest was not able to do his work, which is unsurprising since the new priest was only twelve years old.⁷⁵ The church was thus built by a community, relying on the initiative of the civil administration, and was subjected to the authority of the bishop. A similar case is related in another passage where an important member of a community (a *centenarius*)

⁷⁴ *CDL*, I, no. 4, c. 650; no. 19, 715.

⁷⁵ 'Ne vespero sapit, nec madodinos facere, nec missa cantare' (*CDL*, I, 74).

refers to the church built by his ancestors 'avus et besavus tenuerunt ecclesiam Sanctae Restitutae', making it clear, however, that the building had always been under the Bishop of Arezzo 'et semper usque modo eius diocea fuit'. In fact, when declaring in the dispute, the priest of this church never makes any reference to the private founders of the building.⁷⁶ A certain Gururoald *exercitalis* coming from *vico Reunia* confirms that the church of Santa Restituta had always been under the jurisdiction of the bishop.⁷⁷

This example should not be taken to mean that all private foundations were intimately subjected to episcopal authority. All churches must have their altar consecrated by a bishop, and Mass must be celebrated by a priest appointed by a bishop, albeit sometimes at the request of the owner. But many of these churches did not have a baptistery and thus acted more as 'private churches' for the owner, their family, and the community who depended on them. In other cases, because of the strategic position of the church or the importance of the dependent community, the construction of the church could be the cause of dispute between bishops and private founders attempting to escape from episcopal control. One means of accomplishing this was to transform (or directly found) the church as a monastic building dependent on an abbot, who could be a member of the founder's family. In all these cases, local churches and their control connotes social prestige at a time when Lombard aristocracies were consolidating their power in the territory. Private aristocratic patronage could also be directed at public baptismal churches, as indicated in a capitulary of 782.⁷⁸

For the Garda region, texts record the existence of a great number of properties — termed *curtes* — some of which are linked to the Lombard court in the eighth century.⁷⁹ We still don't know exactly how these *curtes* look archaeologically: as Roman properties they were probably endowed with structures

⁷⁶ *CDL*, I, 67, lines 4–13.

⁷⁷ 'Scio ab infantia mea, et parentes meos dicentes audivi, et per me postea natus sum scio, istas diocias sed isto baptisterio sancta restitutae semper sagationem apud episcopo aredino et consignationem in populo facere, et presbiteros sagrare et altaria' (*CDL*, I, 72, line 30; p. 73, line 4).

⁷⁸ 'Ut ecclesias baptismales seu oraculas qui eas a longo tempore restauraverunt mox iterum restaurare debeant. et tam curtis regia quam et Langobardos talem ibi habeant dominationem, qualem illorum a longo tempore fuit consuetudo.' See Azzara and Moro, *I capitolari italici*, pp. 58–59.

⁷⁹ *CDV*, I, no. 23; *CDV*, I, no. 125; *CDV*, II, no. 63; *CDV*, II, nos. 72, 74. For this territory, see Ibsen, 'Lineamenti per un contesto', pp. 232–33. For a general view on how these *curtes* were managed, see Gasparri, *Grandi proprietari e sovrani*, pp. 429–42.

Table 3.1. Main churches discussed in the text, with approximate measurements.

| | Context | Chronology | Width (m) | Length (m) |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Santa Maria a Pontenove di Bedizzole | road network | end 5th – beg. 6th c. | 11.60 – 20.30 (+ annexes) | 21.55 |
| San Pietro in Mavinas | suburban | end 5th – beg. 6th c. | 8.34 – 14.75 (+ annexes) | 22.20 – 26.45 (+ apsis) |
| San Cassiano | road network | end 5th – beg. 6th c. | 7.24 – 13.30 (+ annexes) | 15.25 |
| San Lorenzo di Desenzano | road network | end 5th – beg. 6th c. | 9.5 – 18.25 (+ annexes) | 20.40 – 25.00 (+ apsis) |
| San Lorenzo di Tenno | settlement | 5th–6th c.(?) | 9.50 | 22.90 |
| Rocca di Garda | castrum | end 5th – beg. 6th c. | 6.00 | 14.00 |
| San Martino di Lundo | castrum | end 5th – beg. 6th c. | 6.90 | 11.00 |
| San Zeno dell'Oselet | early medieval property | 7th c.(?) | 5.15 | 8.55 |
| San Pietro di Tignale | close to castrum? | 7th c. | 6.75 | 12.65 |
| San Martino di Lonato | early medieval property | 8th c. | 3.80 | 7.80 |
| San Pietro di Limone | early medieval property | 8th–9th c. | 4.00 | 8.70 |
| Santa Maria Assunta di Maguzzano | early medieval property | 8th–9th c. | 4.90 | 11.30 |

devoted to production and storage of agricultural goods, perhaps with a residential building. The presence of a church is frequently referred to at these royal *curtes*, many of which were managed by high officials of the Lombard court. During the ninth century, many of these *curtes* (and their churches) passed to the hands of ecclesiastical institutions, including the monasteries of San Colombano at Bobbio, Santa Giulia at Brescia, San Benedetto at Leno, and San Zeno at Verona. The ‘Polittico di Santa Giulia’,⁸⁰ which summarizes the properties of this Brescian monastery at the beginning of the tenth century, records the location of many *curtes* and their churches located in the Garda region. Few of these churches have been subjected to archaeological investigation, so we

⁸⁰ Pasquali, ‘La distribuzione geografica delle cappelle’; Pasquali, ‘S. Giulia di Brescia’.

can only rely on fragmentary sculptural evidence that these churches existed in the eighth and ninth centuries. We do not know if they were already built as monastic chapels (Santa Giulia at Brescia was founded in 753) or if they were instead founded by the Lombard elites in their properties (or in the royal *curtes*) and then just passed on to monastic hands.⁸¹

Conclusions

It is very difficult to understand the complex variety of churches described in the written sources: public, private, private in founding but public in functioning, founded for pastoral care, funerary in function, dependent on a monastery, serving a *curtes*. There are still more difficulties in the archaeological record.

The dimensions of a church are probably an indicator of the number of people it was constructed to house, but extended analysis on the subject is needed. Many of the seventh- to ninth-century churches from the Garda region have small dimensions compared to fifth- to sixth-century buildings (see Table 3.1), and could correspond to this more limited private use and therefore be identified as private churches built by local landowners. Further studies are needed on the identification of the function of particular liturgical arrangements which could indicate the function of a particular church. Furthermore — as shown by the documented ‘dispute’ between the Bishops of Arezzo and Siena — some churches could be built by a private person but immediately assume a public function or, as is also documented, the function of these buildings could change through time depending on liturgical needs or on a particular political situation.

It is nevertheless evident that the modern study of churches must be undertaken within a wider framework than that of the single building and its immediate context, and must have a sufficiently large chronological and geographical scope to understand their full complexity.

⁸¹ For a wider analysis of the churches discussed in the text, see Chavarría Arnau and Crosato, ‘La cristianizzazione delle campagne nella provincia di Mantova’.

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LOCAL CHURCHES AND SOCIAL POWER IN EARLY MEDIEVAL IRELAND: A CASE STUDY OF THE KINGDOM OF FIR MAIGE

Tomás Ó Carragáin*

Introduction

A lot has been written in recent years on the patronage of major Irish churches by provincial and regional kings,¹ but rather less attention has been paid to the relationships between local elites and local churches. One of the challenges in approaching this subject is to distinguish between churches in terms of function and character, a vital issue if we are to understand the motivations of their secular patrons. Contrary to the traditional view, it now seems that only a minority of church sites were monastic in character. For example, some were established for a particular local kingdom or subdivision thereof, while others seem to have been proprietary churches associated with particular kin-groups.

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¹ To take just three examples: Ó Floinn, 'Clonmacnoise: Art and Patronage'; Swift, 'Brigit, Patrick and the Kings of Kildare'; Ó Carragáin, *Churches in Early Medieval Ireland*, pp. 80–82, 118–35, 152–54, 246–53.

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We are confronted by a wide spectrum of sites which, however, are often difficult to characterize exactly due to the terminological flexibility of the documentary sources.² Most sites followed similar tenets of architecture and layout so that, even in areas with relatively intelligible archaeology, we must do our best to distinguish between them on the basis of quite subtle variations on these common ideas.³

The most promising approach is an interdisciplinary landscape perspective. This was the premise of the Making Christian Landscapes project, based in the Department of Archaeology, University College Cork, and funded by the Heritage Council through the INSTAR programme.⁴ Its goal was to consider how conversion and Christianization were manifested in the early medieval landscape (c. AD 400–1170) by producing nuanced analyses of quite small study areas. Nine areas, usually corresponding to local kingdoms, were chosen within which all relevant strands of evidence were considered, including topography, land use, settlements, cemeteries, boundaries, landholdings and estates, routeways, and pre-Christian monuments. Influenced by Geertz's concept of 'thick description', this approach facilitates fine-grained analyses, at the level of local communities, which seek to 'ask large questions in small places'.⁵ The consistent methodology employed allows comparison and generalization.

Most of the case studies were chosen primarily because they incorporated important excavated sites (e.g. Faughart, Co. Louth, Southern Uí Fáeláin, Co. Kildare, Mag Réta, Co. Laois) and/or outstanding field archaeology (e.g. Corcu Duibne, Aran Islands). This paper, however, is about Fir Maige (Map 4.1), a case study chosen primarily because of documentary sources, though it also has a few important excavations.⁶ The area has the richest documentary sources relating to early boundaries, topography, and ecclesiastical organization in Ireland, and Paul MacCotter's analysis of this material, undertaken as part of the project, provides the territorial and historical framework for this paper.⁷

² Sharpe 'Churches and Communities'; Etchingham, *Church Organisation*, p. 457; Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, pp. 241–81.

³ Ó Carragáin, 'Church Buildings and Pastoral Care', pp. 122–23.

⁴ Ó Carragáin and others, 'Making Christian Landscapes', passim.

⁵ Joyner, *Shared Traditions*, p. 1; Geertz, *The Interpretation*, pp. 6–7, 23; Boazman, *Theme and Variations*, pp. 16–17.

⁶ Monk, 'A Tale of Two Ringforts'; Carroll, 'Brigown'; Kiely and O'Donoghue, 'Archaeological Excavation Report: Gortnahown 2'.

⁷ MacCotter, 'Túath, Manor and Parish'.



Map 4.1.

Location map of the early medieval kingdom of Fir Maige in Ireland and Western Europe. Map by Tomás Ó Carragáin and José Carlos Sánchez-Pardo using Demis WMS World Map.

My main purpose is to consider the range of church sites in Fir Maige and their relationships with the local elite. In particular I will emphasize that one of the things that differentiated people (minor nobles, rulers of districts, local kings) in terms of social power and status was the number and character of church sites they were in a position to establish and patronize.

All possible ecclesiastical settlements were assessed, where possible in the field, and at least through scrutiny of a range of maps, aerial photographs, and documentary sources, and were categorized as definitely, probably, possibly, or probably not early medieval (Map 4.2; see Table 4.1 in the Appendix).⁸ The ecclesiastical archaeology of Fir Maige is more typical than areas such as pensinsular Kerry which has extensive remains in stone.⁹ Of the seventy-three possibly early sites (i.e. those founded before AD 1100, usually by AD 800) thirty-one have some archaeological evidence and in only fourteen cases is this unambiguous. The most common indicators are curvilinear enclosures (often

⁸ For more on the methodology employed, see Ó Carragáin, 'Church Sites and Other Settlements'.

⁹ For example Ó Carragáin, 'A Landscape Converted'.

Nevertheless, these sources show a dense distribution of churches. Obviously not all were contemporary, but nor have we identified all the early sites, even those mentioned in our key source, Críchad in Chailli (e.g. Cill Cuili, Cill O nGeibinnain). Excluding land above 200 m where one rarely finds permanent enclosed settlement, the area of Fir Maige is 690 km² which, divided among the definitely (34) and probably (16) early churches, gives an area of 13.8 km² per church dropping to 9.5 km² when possible sites (23) are included. This seems to be about average, for most of the Making Christian Landscapes case studies were characterized by between 10 km² and 20 km² per definite/probable church.¹² Other settlement is represented primarily by ringforts, usually with one enclosure (univallate), 25–40 m in diameter (all measurements provided here are internal), with a minority of high-status multivallate examples. Most were constructed and occupied in the period 600–850, though some are earlier and some remained in use much later.¹³ The distribution of definite examples can be supplemented by destroyed or poorly preserved enclosures that are the right size for ringforts, though some of them could be burial monuments such as ring-ditches and barrows (see Maps 4.5, 4.6 below). A modest number of unenclosed souterrains, dating mainly to c. 750–1100, supplement this picture somewhat.¹⁴

The Kingdom of Fir Maige

Fir Maige, which incorporates present-day north-east Cork and the south-east corner of Limerick, was one of the 185 or so local kingdoms of early medieval Ireland. The first comprehensive map of these kingdoms was published in 2008, but in most cases it is not possible to map their subdivisions.¹⁵ Fir Maige is an exception primarily because of Críchad in Chailli (henceforth Críchad), a topographical text of c. 1138–51, a few decades before the Anglo-Norman colonization, which describes the fifteen major subdivisions of Fir Maige, that is, fourteen *túatha* (local districts) and the ecclesiastical estate of Brigown.¹⁶

¹² Ó Carragáin, 'Church Sites and Other Settlements'.

¹³ Stout, *The Irish Ringfort*, fig. 2; Kerr, *Early Christian Settlement*, pp. 98–99.

¹⁴ Clinton, *Souterrains*. We are lucky to be able to draw upon the thorough work of the Cork Archaeological Survey, which, unless otherwise stated, includes descriptions of all sites referred to here: *Archaeological Inventory*, IV, v. These descriptions are available online in the Archaeological Survey Database.

¹⁵ MacCotter, *Medieval Ireland*, pp. 256–64.

¹⁶ Power, *Críchad*, pp. 45–55.

MacCotter used later sources to map the Anglo-Norman manors of the area and then plotted the many identifiable place names in Críchad against this background.¹⁷ This demonstrated a high degree of continuity: most manors were subdivisions of early medieval *túatha* (sometimes based on the existing subdivisions: *bailte*) and respected *túath* boundaries, as is clear from the fact that many of the place names were near later boundaries. It was possible to combine this evidence to map the early medieval *túatha*. These boundaries are approximate and, in a few places (including stretches of the boundaries of Eóganacht Glenomnach and Brigown), conjectural.¹⁸ However the essentials are clear, and the result is the most detailed territorial map produced to date for any area of early medieval Ireland.

Túath (plural: *túatha*) was a flexible term which could be used to refer to different scales of territory: regional kingdoms (e.g. Corcu Duibne comprising three local kingdoms), local kingdoms (e.g. Fir Maige; often corresponding roughly to later medieval cantreds), and districts within a local kingdom, as we have here.¹⁹ This last category of *túath* may have served as the unit for military levy and was ruled, not by kings, but by hereditary aristocratic rulers called *taisigh túaithe* (henceforth *taisigh*; singular *taisech*).²⁰ It was itself divided into *bailte* (singular: *baile*), and again these are enumerated in Críchad. In Fir Maige, seven of the *túatha* described in Críchad had once been subdivisions of larger *túatha*, suggesting a tendency for subdivision over the course of the period, perhaps in part due to a rise in population.²¹ Thus, MacCotter's depiction is far from static. Nonetheless he was also able to demonstrate considerable continuity from at least the seventh century, and this is strongly supported by the distribution of elite settlements such as multivallate ringforts as we shall see.

Within each local Irish kingdom at least one *túath* was closely associated with the king and incorporated one or more royal *bailte*. In Fir Maige, the his-

¹⁷ MacCotter, 'Túath, Manor and Parish', passim.

¹⁸ In Maps 4.2 and 4.3, two changes have been made to MacCotter's depiction of the extents of the Brigown estate. MacCotter, 'Túath, Manor and Parish'. The reasons for these changes are explained in Ó Carragáin, 'The Archaeology of Ecclesiastical Estates', pp. 275–76.

¹⁹ MacCotter, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 47, favours the term late-*túath* for such subdivisions of local kingdoms because this was the sense in which the term was most commonly used at the end of the early medieval period. This term is not adopted here, however, for it implies the subdivisions themselves, and the application of this term to them, are late developments whereas he himself shows that this was not the case (*ibid.*, pp. 23, 47, 89–91).

²⁰ MacCotter, *Medieval Ireland*, pp. 23, 464–67.

²¹ MacCotter, 'Túath, Manor and Parish', p. 258.

tory and structure of lordship was complex, and as a result several *túatha* have royal associations. At different times kings were supplied by three rival groups who claimed common Fir Maige ancestry. The one-time royal *túatha* of each of these are identifiable in Críchad: Uí Ingardail (probably the home territory of the Uí Chausáin sixth-century kings), Uí Chúscraid/Uí Chúscraid Sléibe (the dominant Fir Maige group in the seventh century), and finally Mag Finn/Mag Uí Chathláin. In two cases these *túatha* had divided by the time Críchad was composed.²² These local kings were subject to powerful intrusive overlords, the Eóganacht Glenomnach. The Síl Cathail ancestors of this group had possessions near Emly and Cashel. In the sixth century they developed interests in Fir Maige, by the seventh they claimed to be overlords of the Fir Maige kings, and by the eighth century at the latest Fir Maige was their main base. They held the kingship of Munster more than any other dynasty from the time of its shadowy origins until the early ninth century, and therefore also sometimes controlled the provincial capital of Cashel, Co. Tipperary, *c.* 40 km to the north-east. Their strongest king, Cathal Mac Finguine (d. 742), even claimed the kingship of Tara.²³ In Fir Maige their home-*túath* comprised Eóganacht Glenomnach and probably also Uí Máille Machaire, though this had become a separate *túath* by the time Críchad was composed.²⁴ By the ninth century, and probably before, Fir Maige was divided in two: the Eóganacht Glenomnach were kings of the eastern half and overlords of the whole kingdom, while a Fir Maige lineage, the Uí Labrada (later Uí Dubacáin) based in Mag Finn, were kings of the western half.²⁵ That this division was based on, or revived, an existing long-lived one is suggested by the fact that its southern stretch is on the line of the Claidh Dubh, a linear earthwork dating to before AD 100.²⁶

Túath Churches and Parish Formation

This uniquely detailed territorial framework helps us to distinguish between different types of church. The principal foundations of Fir Maige's patron saints form one category: while virtually all churches had a certain amount of land, these ones had large estates (Map 4.2). In the east, St Fionnchú's church of

²² MacCotter, 'Túath, Manor and Parish', pp. 236–42.

²³ MacCotter, *Colmán*, pp. 50–62; Gleeson, 'Making Provincial Kingship', *passim*.

²⁴ MacCotter, 'Túath, Manor and Parish', pp. 242–43.

²⁵ MacCotter, 'Túath, Manor and Parish', p. 245.

²⁶ Doody, *Ballyhoura Hills*, p. 569; Bhreathnach, 'The Claidh Dubh', p. 577.

Brigown (Brí Gobann) had an estate comparable in size to a *túath*. St Molaga's estate was established within the royal *túath* of Uí Chúscraid/Uí Chúscraid Sléibe and shared between his two main foundations: Labbamolaga and Aghacross. The estate of St Cránaid's principal church, Clenor, was established within the royal *túath* of Mag Finn/Mag Uí Chatháin. All three estates may have been established in the seventh century.²⁷ The topography and archaeology of these estates is discussed elsewhere, along with the limited evidence for the early stages of the conversion process.²⁸ Here our main focus is on *túath* churches and lesser churches. As we shall see, however, with the exception of Brigown, the landed churches also doubled as *túath* churches, so they will be considered here in that context.

One of the most interesting aspects of Críchad is that it identifies one ecclesiastical site in each *túath* as its church or burial ground. So what is the status and character of these '*túath* churches' and when did the designation originate? Críchad must be read, first and foremost, as a reflection of its mid-twelfth-century context, and this encourages us to interpret *túath* churches as a stepping stone in the process of parish formation. This was formally initiated around 1100 as part of the Gregorian reform movement and was continued by the Anglo-Normans after their arrival (from c. 1170). Críchad refers to the '*túath* churches' of the eastern half of Fir Maige as *ceall*, 'church site', while those of the western half are called *uamh adlaici*, meaning 'burial tomb'.²⁹ The reason for this distinction is unclear, but the latter phrase perhaps suggests an attempt to restrict burial rights to these sites. If so, this should be understood in the context of contemporary efforts by proponents of church reform to restrict burial, and other roles such as baptism, to approved churches.³⁰ In areas with more excavation we know that burial away from ecclesiastical sites was becoming quite rare at this time.³¹

This possibility is supported by the case of Cill Uí nGeibinnain. This is an unlocated *baile* of Mag nAla in which lived two families, Uí Gheibennain and Uí Chailte. Clearly it was named for a local church which itself was named for one of the families living there.³² Rahan (Dromrahan) was the *uamh adlaici* of

²⁷ MacCotter, 'Túath, Manor and Parish', pp. 249–57.

²⁸ Ó Carragáin, 'The Archaeology of Ecclesiastical Estates'.

²⁹ I am grateful to Pádraig Ó Riain for discussion about this phrase.

³⁰ Fleming, *Gille of Limerick*, pp. 158–59; Ó Carragáin 'Archaeology of Early Medieval Baptism', pp. 285–87.

³¹ Ó Carragáin, 'From Family Cemeteries', p. 222.

³² Paul MacCotter, pers. comm.

Mag nAla, but Clenor, *uamb adlaici* of Mag Uí Chatháin, is also designated *uamb adlaici* of three families in Mag nAla including the Uí Gheibennain and the Uí Chailte. This is the only case in Críchad in which the church of one *túath* was also the designated church of part of another *túath*. There may have been practical reasons for this: the lands of these families may correspond to the small portion of Mag nAla that lay north of the Blackwater (see note 97). The implication is that the Uí Gheibennain (and the other two families) should be buried at Clenor despite the presence of a much nearer family church, perhaps now abandoned. This suggests that the designation *túath* church was not merely honorific. Rather *túath* churches had, or more likely claimed, certain rights, including burial rights.

A detailed consideration of parish formation is beyond the scope of this paper.³³ It is important, though, briefly to consider the extent of continuity between the early and later medieval periods in the kingdom (see Table 4.2 in the Appendix). Of the fifty definitely/probably early churches, twenty-three (46%) have no evidence of later medieval use, though it is likely that the evidence simply does not survive in some cases. That this group includes three *túath* churches shows the extent to which things were to change after Críchad was composed.³⁴ The group also includes Kilcanway, which was associated with the *taisigh* of Mag Uí Chatháin, as well as Killuragh and Kilmaculla, secondary foundations of important saints (Table 4.1 and below). However most churches that fell out of use were probably minor sites. Some may have fallen out of use during the early medieval period, others in the twelfth century or later. This supports the idea that, in some areas of Ireland, though apparently not all,³⁵ there was a reduction in the number of churches in the later centuries of the early medieval period, perhaps reflecting a partial shift in burial from kin-group cemeteries (both ecclesiastical and non-ecclesiastical) to community churches.³⁶

³³ See MacCotter, 'Túath, Manor and Parish', pp. 215–36.

³⁴ Two of these were the churches of relatively marginal *túatha* (Uí Finnaduig and Túath Uí Rosa), but the other, Ballynoe (Cill Conáin), was the church of Uí Ingardail, which had once been a royal *túath* (see below). The group also includes three sites represented in Críchad by ecclesiastical place names but which may not have been functioning churches by that time.

³⁵ In a few of the Making Christian Landscapes case studies, such as Southern Uí Fáeláin, Co. Kildare, almost all known early churches continued in use in the later medieval period.

³⁶ Ó Carragáin, 'Cemetery Settlements and Local Churches', pp. 357–59; Ó Carragáin, 'From Family Cemeteries', pp. 222–24.

It remains unlikely, however, that Críchad reflects a serious attempt to restrict burial entirely to *túath* churches, and if so it was probably not successful. The *túatha* in Críchad usually comprise two or three later medieval parishes and/or manors (some of which correspond to one or more early medieval *bailte*),³⁷ and we know from excavation that, even in the later medieval period, burial was not confined to the parish church.³⁸ If burial was restricted to *túath* churches in mid-twelfth-century Fir Maige, this would have involved a dramatic reduction in the number of burial grounds followed by a dramatic increase in subsequent centuries. In fact there is evidence for later medieval use of seventeen definitely/probably early sites (and eleven possibly early sites) that were not *túath* churches (Table 4.2). While we cannot rule out the possibility that some of these were abandoned and later re-established, it is more likely that they remained in use throughout. Most *túath* churches later became parish churches (9/13) as did a further six definitely/probably early sites and eight possibly early sites. Thus at least 40 per cent and up to 62 per cent (23/37) of parish churches were early in origin. However, a substantial number of new church sites were founded in the Anglo-Norman period: twenty sites including fourteen parish churches representing about a third of all churches in use at this time (20/63). This was probably due to a combination of factors. In some areas there may not have been enough functioning early churches to fulfil contemporary needs (e.g. in Mag nAla and Túath Uí Chonaill?), while in other areas it may have been decided that existing sites were not conveniently located or were otherwise unsuitable.

Interestingly, the number of new Anglo-Norman foundations is about the same as the number of sites that seem to have been abandoned. Our chronology of church foundation and duration in Fir Maige is not exact, but by analogy with other areas it is likely that the majority of early medieval sites were founded by the ninth century.³⁹ While some sites had probably already fallen out of use by then, this may represent a high point in the density of churches. Thereafter there may have been a modest decline in the number of churches before and during the twelfth century, followed in the Anglo-Norman period perhaps by further abandonment and certainly by a spate of new foundations. The processes behind this development were quite different from those that led to the initial foundation of churches up to the ninth century. A higher pro-

³⁷ MacCotter, 'Túath, Manor and Parish', p. 235.

³⁸ For example, Ó Carragáin 'Excavations at Toureen', pp. 93–100.

³⁹ Ó Carragáin, 'From Family Cemeteries', pp. 329–35.

portion of churches now probably had public (including parochial) functions and served communities rather than kin-groups. Nonetheless, in heavily colonized areas with a relatively high population like Fir Maige, the result seems to have been a broadly similar density of sites. This does not hold, however, in some western areas such as Iveragh, Co. Kerry, where the process of parish formation was not as intensive; as a result the density of functioning churches in the later medieval period was considerably lower than it had been in the early medieval period.⁴⁰

Whatever the ambitions of *túath* churches in the twelfth century with regard to regulation of burial and possibly other activities, they clearly represent something quite different from the Anglo-Norman parish system that would later emerge, for only a quarter of parish churches had been *túath* churches (9/37). While they can be viewed as a proto-parish network reflecting developments around 1100, it is perhaps just as legitimate to interpret them as a perpetuation or adaptation of earlier institutions. Some of the earliest churches founded in Ireland in the fifth and sixth centuries were the designated churches of particular kingdoms, or subdivisions of kingdoms, and it has been argued that these were generally non-monastic, perhaps with a pastoral role. Their names often combined that of the territory or population group with *domnach mór*, meaning 'major church', and in the seventh century Tírechán referred to them as 'free churches', presumably to distinguish them from lesser, proprietary churches and churches controlled directly by major sites.⁴¹ The place name *donagh* (from *domnach*) is absent from Fir Maige, and there is no evidence to suggest that its *túath* churches were conversion-period foundations. Like Fir Maige's major landed churches (above), many of them may be post-600, and we do not know if they were conceived of as *túath* churches from their foundation. However, the *domnach* sites in other kingdoms show that there was a precedent for the *idea* of a designated church of a local territory and support the possibility that some of Fir Maige's *túath* churches were given this role before the twelfth century.⁴² After all, this idea is also well attested in other regions of early medieval Europe, long before the formal establishment of parishes, as some of the other papers in this volume illustrate.

⁴⁰ Ó Carragáin, 'Cemetery Settlements and Local Churches', p. 358.

⁴¹ Sharpe, 'Churches and Communities', pp. 93–95.

⁴² Sharpe, 'Churches and Communities', pp. 96–97.

Elite Settlements and Churches in the Landscape

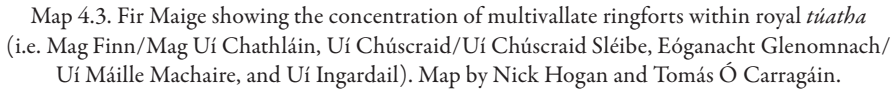
Túath churches must have been closely associated with the kings and/or *taoiseigh* of their *túath*, certainly in the twelfth century and probably before (see below). But how were these relationships expressed in the landscape, and were there other churches that also had close links to the secular elite? In order to investigate this we need to assess the documentary and archaeological evidence for elite settlements and landholding.

Apart from church sites, the most readily identifiable high-status settlement type is the multivallate (usually bivallate) ringfort (c. 11% of ringforts in Fir Maige). The various royal *túatha* constitute c. 42 per cent of land below 200 m, but they have 86 per cent (38/44) of multivallate ringforts, with a particular concentration in the two most important *túatha*. There are seven each in Uí Ingardail and Uí Chúscraid/Uí Chúscraid Sléibe,⁴³ twelve in Mag Finn/Mag Uí Chathláin, and thirteen in Eóganacht Glenomnach/Uí Máille Machaire (Map 4.3). In contrast none of the non-royal *túatha* have more than one multivallate and two have none.⁴⁴ Of course our evidence is incomplete. There are some levelled multivallate enclosures which may have been ringforts in non-royal *túatha* (e.g. Wallstown: see below); therefore we cannot assume that where there is a single extant multivallate in a *túath* it is the residence of the *taisech* (see below). It is telling, however, that levelled multivallates are particularly common in royal *túatha* (e.g. Cregg: see below). The pattern would be reinforced further if we took into account high-status sites that are not ringforts or churches (e.g. Caherdrinny: see below). Apart from multivallates, another potentially high-status group of ringforts are unusually large univallates (>45 m internally; c. 7% of ringforts). Fifty-eight per cent (15/26) of these are in royal *túatha*, indicating a correlation albeit a significantly weaker one.⁴⁵

⁴³ One of these, in Ballykeating, may have been a short distance outside the border of Uí Chúscraid. Note also that it was not possible to determine whether there are any multivallate or large univallate forts in the Co. Limerick portion of this *túath* due to a lack of detailed published information. This 22 km² was therefore excluded when calculating the proportion of Fir Maige made up of royal *túatha*.

⁴⁴ The *túatha* with a single multivallate are Túath Uí Rosa (in Carrigee townland), Mag nAla (Rockforest West), Uí Bece Uachtaraig (Carrigleagh), Tuath Uí Duinnín (a trivallate fort in Farahy), and Túath Uí Chonaill (Billeragh West). There is also a single multivallate in the ecclesiastical estate of Brigown.

⁴⁵ In royal *túatha* there are six in Eóganacht Glenomnach/Uí Máille Machaire, five in Mag Finn/Mag Uí Chathláin, three in Túath Uí Chúscraid/Uí Chúscraid Sléibe, and one in Uí Ingardail. In non-royal *túatha* there are four in Uí Béce Uachtaraig, three in Túath Uí Duinnín,



The correlation between multivallates and royal *túatha* is a striking illustration of the uneven distribution of power within this local kingdom. It also provides important supporting evidence for MacCotter's argument that the *túatha* originated hundreds of years before Críchad was composed. While most ringforts date to the period *c.* 600–850 (see above), multivallates tend to be

⁴⁶ Lisleagh in Eóganacht Glenomnach, Manning in Uí Máille Machaire, Templenoe in Uí Ingardail, and Cahermee in Mag Finn.

relatively early, some as early as *c.* 500.⁴⁷ Uniquely in this part of Ireland we are able to investigate whether this correlation between history and archaeology also holds *within* individual *túatha*. This is because Críchad enumerates the *bailte* (subdivisions) of each *túath* including those of its elite. The *bailte* listed first in Críchad is always the most prestigious. In the case of royal (or one-time royal) *túatha* it was the one most closely associated with the royal lineage, while in other *túatha* it was the baile of its non-royal ruler, the *táisech*. Royal *túatha* also usually had *táisigh*, however: the offices were distinct and that of *táisech* persisted if a *túath* lost its royal status. Most of these elite *bailte* have been identified on the ground by Ó Buachalla with revisions by MacCotter, but their archaeology or topography have not previously been considered.⁴⁸ As we shall see, they tend to have multivallate ringforts. This suggests a degree of continuity in local power structures over several centuries.

There is a recurring spatial relationship between elite *bailte* with their multivallate ringforts on the one hand and *túath* churches on the other: with rare exceptions, they are about two kilometres apart. Thus, they are not paired with each other, but the distances between them are fairly consistent and quite modest in the context of *túatha* which are generally about ten kilometres across. The circa two kilometre distance should not be seen as evidence that their relationship was not a close one. As shown in the next sections, in early medieval Ireland power was exercised at a variety of sites including settlements, assembly sites, inauguration sites, and churches. These were dispersed across the landscape rather than combined at one location. In this case the two kilometre distance may express the fact that *túath* churches had public functions; the elite patronized them but did not monopolize them entirely (see further below). Another likely factor is the settlement matrix into which churches were fitted. *Túath* churches were important settlements, and while only a minority of them were granted extensive ecclesiastical estates (see above), Críchad shows that they each had their own *bailte*, a substantial landholding farmed by the families associated with the church. It is quite common for this baile to be adjacent to that of the king or *táisech* (see Table 4.3 in the Appendix), but the settlements themselves are not usually on baile boundaries and so are usually some distance from each other. In addition to the *túath* church, there is also usually a lesser

⁴⁷ See for example Doyle, 'Mediterranean and Frankish Pottery Imports', pp. 24–25, on the date of Garranes multivallate ringfort.

⁴⁸ Ó Buachalla, 'Placenames of North-East Cork', pp. 49, 91–92; MacCotter, *Medieval Ireland*, pp. 266–69. Unless otherwise stated all the place-name (as distinct from archaeological) identifications below derive from these sources.

church even closer to the elite *baile*/settlement. Some of these also had their own modest *bailte*, suggesting that they were significant sites (see below), but they may not have had the public functions of *túath* churches. In some cases, it seems reasonable to characterize these as elite proprietary churches, though we should not be too prescriptive about their character (see below). Given that most of the elite *bailte* and the churches designated as ‘*túath* churches’ in Críchad were probably established by the ninth century (see above), the consistent spatial relationship between them supports the possibility that at least some of these churches were recognized as having a particular function and status before the twelfth century, though their role doubtless changed over time.

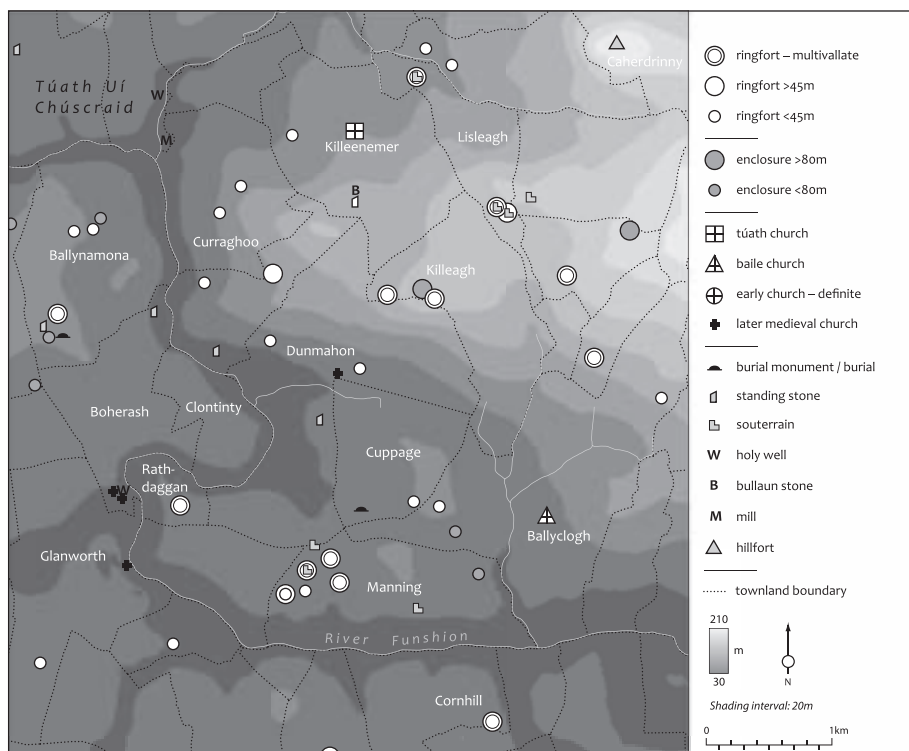
In order to substantiate the patterns sketched out here, it is essential to set out in detail the evidence for elite landholding, churches, and other sites in the following sections, beginning with the royal *túatha*.⁴⁹ Readers seeking only a general picture may wish to go directly to the ‘Overview’ and ‘Conclusion’.

Elite Settlements, Churches, and Other Royal Sites in the *Túath* of Eóganacht Glenomnach

Eóganacht Glenomnach, which probably once incorporated Uí Máille Machaire, was the eponymous home *túath* of the over-kings of Fir Maige (see above). In the twelfth century the dominant Eóganacht Glenomnach sept was Uí Chaím (O’Keeffe) and, as one would expect, Críchad places this in ‘the noblest baile’ of the *túath*, Magh bhFhece. This is glossed Glennamhu and must have included the townlands of Glanworth (for which the Eóganacht Glenomnach were named) and Boherash, extending to the boundary with Túath Uí Chúsraid, the line of which is uncertain in this area (Map 4.4).⁵⁰ The *baile* also encompassed Clontinty and, on the other side of the river Funshion, Cuppage. It must therefore also have included Dunmahon, which lies between these two townlands, and probably also Rathdaggan. The earlier importance of this area is suggested by a concentration of five standing stones as well as a kerb circle and ringditch. While, as has always been assumed, it is possible that Glanworth castle (in Boherash) was built on the site of an earlier stronghold, no early medieval evidence was found during Manning’s extensive excavations

⁴⁹ The reader can find an interesting parallel reflection on the spatial relationship between churches and elite settlement in the cases of northern France and southern Scandinavia in Anne Nissen’s contribution to this volume.

⁵⁰ MacCotter, ‘The History of the Castle’, p. 1.



Map 4.4. The core of the royal *túath* of Eóganacht Glenomnach/Uí Máile Machaire. Townland boundaries and some townland names are shown. The morphology of the unclassified enclosures shown here suggests they could be early medieval, though some might be for burial rather than settlement. The north-west corner of this view was in Túath Uí Chúscraid but the *túath* boundaries in this particular area are uncertain. Map by Nick Hogan and Tomás Ó Carragáin.

there.⁵¹ There are, however, other high-status settlements extant within the royal *baile*. Rathdaggan (Ráth an Deagánaigh: ‘Rath/Ringfort of the Dean’) is named for a bivallate ringfort,⁵² and on the boundary of Dunmahon with

⁵¹ Power, *Crichad*, p. 59; Manning, *History and Archaeology of Glanworth Castle*, pp. 135–36.

⁵² This is an intriguing name. While the dean in question could be a later medieval ecclesiastic, it is not clear why he would be associated with an early medieval ringfort. Old Irish *decān* come from the Latin *decānus* (‘chief of ten people; dean’), a term sometimes used for minor public and manorial officials (as well as clerical officials) in early medieval Brittany and Francia. Given Rathdaggan’s position at the heart of a royal *baile*, one wonders whether this was the sense intended here. See Davies, *Small Worlds*, pp. 142–44; Ó Dálaigh, ‘Logainmneacha’.



Figure 4.1. View from the east of the large hilltop enclosure and conjoined trivallate ringfort in Killeagh on the boundary of the royal *baile* of the Eóganacht Glenomnach.

Source: Cork Archaeological Survey Collection.

Killeagh is another bivallate and one of the very few trivallates in Fir Maige, a site known locally as ‘King Lios’.⁵³

In a remarkable arrangement, this trivallate abuts a much larger circular enclosure (164 m) (Figure 4.1). They are on the summit of the very last hill at the western terminus of the Killworth Mountains, the best possible vantage point from which to view the royal *baile*. The bivallate is a little downslope on the most natural route of ascent from within the *baile*. Though now classified as part of Killeagh, the two hilltop enclosures extend into Dunmahon, and may well have been considered part of the royal *baile*. Power made no mention of the enclosure but interpreted Killeagh as Ceall Aodha (‘Church of Aodha’) and said ‘there must also have been a cillín [children’s burial ground] at Killeagh [...] but no trace or tradition can now be found’.⁵⁴ Building on this supposition, the Cork Archaeological Survey classified the site as possible ecclesiastical enclosure.⁵⁵

pp. 304–05; *Dictionary of the Irish Language* at *decán*. This place-name element also occurs near a number of other Irish royal sites (Patrick Gleeson, pers. comm.).

⁵³ *Archaeological Inventory*, IV, 292.

⁵⁴ Power, *Crichad*, p. 64.

⁵⁵ *Archaeological Inventory*, IV, 446.



Figure 4.2. Sub-rectangular ecclesiastical enclosure surrounding the pre-Romanesque church at Killeenemer, the *túath* church of Eóganacht Glenomnach, from the south-west.

Source: Cork Archaeological Survey Collection.

If this is correct, Killeagh might be for more private use than the nearby *túath* church of Killeenemer, but, as we shall see, Ballyclogh is a more likely candidate for a royal proprietary church. In fact Killeagh probably means Coill Liath ('Grey Wood'),⁵⁶ in which case the enclosure is the only piece of evidence for a church site and there are other possible interpretations of this. While its diameter is what one might expect for an important church site, there are no parallels in Fir Maige (or elsewhere as far as I am aware) for a trivallate ringfort conjoined to an ecclesiastical enclosure. Rather, this figure-of-eight arrangement is reminiscent of royal ceremonial sites of the late prehistoric and early medieval periods, and its hilltop location is also in keeping with such parallels.⁵⁷ The early Irish laws refer to assemblies (*óenacha*) taking place in the green (*faithche*) outside a royal fort;⁵⁸ perhaps here the arrangement was formalized by enclos-

⁵⁶ According to the Placenames Database of Ireland Killeagh means Coill Liath. Ó Dálaigh, 'Logainmneacha', p. 303, says it could be Coill Liath or Cill Liath.

⁵⁷ For example, Raftery, *Pagan Celtic Ireland*, pp. 64–83.

⁵⁸ Swift, 'Óenach Tailten', p. 116.



Figure 4.3. The *tíath* church of Killeenemer from the west with Caherdrinny hill fort in the background. The western portion of the church dates to around 1100. Note the antae (projections of the side-walls beyond the end-walls), a feature common in Irish pre-Romanesque and early Romanesque churches. A few of the doorway voussoirs are visible rebuilt into the west wall at the left.

Photo by Tomás Ó Carragáin.

ing the green. Such greens are also associated with cattle,⁵⁹ so another possible function of the Killeagh enclosure is as a corral for cattle tribute. Only excavation could determine this, though the presence of burials would not in itself solve the issue as these are found at both assembly and church sites. Killeagh townland was probably part of the *baile* of Killeenemer, the *túath* church 1.5 km to the north.⁶⁰ The location of the Killeagh/Dunmahon enclosure on the boundary between these two *bailte* would have facilitated an ecclesiastical dimension to some of the activities that may have taken place within it, as is attested at several royal ceremonial and assembly sites.⁶¹

The prehistoric hillfort of Caherdrinny is a second possible assembly site (see Map 4.4, Figure 4.3). The stone hilltop enclosure at its centre may well be early medieval,⁶² and the second element of the name (Cathair Dhroinge: ‘Stone fort

⁵⁹ *Dictionary of the Irish Language* at *faithche*.

⁶⁰ While Killeagh might have been in the *baile* of Lisleagh, this would require an unusual right-angle in the *baile* boundary. Even if it was part of Lisleagh, the *baile* of Killeenemer probably still abutted the royal *baile* at the junction of Killeenemer and Dunmahon townlands.

⁶¹ On clerical involvement at such sites, see, for example, Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, p. 19.

⁶² Raftery, *Pagan Celtic Ireland*, p. 40; Doody, *Ballyhoura Hills*, p. 548.

of the Company') is commonly used for assembly sites.⁶³ It should not surprise us to have identified more than one potential assembly site within this royal *túath*. Early medieval assemblies were complex affairs that could continue over several days and could involve a variety of meetings of distinct, though sometimes overlapping, groups. One of a number of possible scenarios is that the Killeagh enclosure was for assemblies of the *túath* while Caherdrinny was for assemblies of Fir Maige as a whole. We have no early history for Killeenemer, and it has no known saintly or monastic associations. Aenamhna, the second element of the name, may relate to Glennamhna, as in Eóganacht Glenomnach, in which case it underscores the site's role as the church of their *túath*.⁶⁴ It has a large, somewhat rectilinear enclosure (190 m) and its church probably dates to c. 1100, making it one of the earliest churches in the country with a round-headed doorway (Figures 4.2 and 4.3).⁶⁵ This must have been commissioned by the Uí Chaím, perhaps in emulation of buildings with similar doorways built around this time by regional kings such as the Uí Briain at sites like Cashel. Fittingly enough, given the pre-eminence of Eóganacht Glenomnach, it is the only extant pre-Anglo-Norman stone building in Fir Maige outside one of the three large ecclesiastical estates; all or most of the other *túath* churches were probably of wood.⁶⁶

Adjoining both the royal *baile* and Killeenemer was the *baile* of Curraghoo in which were the Uí Finguine sept of Eóganacht Glenomnach, who had been kings in the mid-eleventh century.⁶⁷ Presumably they had been displaced from the royal *baile* with the rise of the Uí Chaím by c. 1100. The *baile* of Curraghoo included an unusually large univallate ringfort (50 m diameter), possibly the bivallate in Ballynamona townland, and the early medieval mill in Ballykenly.⁶⁸ The *bailte* discussed so far seem to represent the core of the *túath* as it was in the twelfth century, containing seven of its eight multivallate ringforts and a notable density of univallates, including the excavated pair with extensive iron-

⁶³ Ó Dálaigh, 'Logainmneacha', pp. 76–77; Patrick Gleeson, pers. comm.

⁶⁴ Ó Dálaigh, 'Logainmneacha', p. 339.

⁶⁵ Monk, 'Early Medieval Secular and Ecclesiastical Settlement', p. 44; *Archaeological Inventory*, IV, 441; O'Keeffe 'Architectural Traditions', p. 121; Ó Carragáin, *Churches in Early Medieval Ireland*, pp. 227–28, 311.

⁶⁶ Ó Carragáin, 'The Archaeology of Ecclesiastical Estates', p. 275.

⁶⁷ MacCotter, *Colmán*, pp. 59–60.

⁶⁸ There is another early medieval mill within Eóganacht Glenomnach at Glenwood. Rynne, *Archaeology and Technology*, II, 324–25, 328–29; pers. comm.

working evidence in Lisleagh.⁶⁹ Outside this core area there was an important site in or around Ballindangan called Daingen Eóganachta ('Fortress of the Eóganacht'), possibly the large (54 m) hilltop ringfort in Flemingstown, an adjoining townland.

MacCotter's suggestion that Uí Máille Machaire once formed part of Eóganacht Glenomnach⁷⁰ is supported by the fact that no *táisech* is listed for Eóganacht Glenomnach, perhaps because this role had previously been fulfilled by the *táisech* of Uí Máille Machaire. This individual was based at Cornhill, and on the top of this hill is an unusually large (51 m diameter) bivallate fort with some stone walling, probably the Cathair (i.e. stone fort) Meic Maile mentioned in Críchad. Another piece of supporting evidence is the fact that, like other royal *túatha*, the *baile* of the *táisech* is not the first one listed. This honour goes to Licklash, now a townland with no ringforts but with a large barrow. Possibly this was the Licklash (Leic Ghlais: 'Green Stone'/'Tombstone') itself, or more likely there was an important stone associated with it. In this regard it is interesting to note Bhreathnach's suggestion that the stone (*cloch*) in the name Cloghleafin, royal site of the Uí Chúscaid, might be a reference to their inauguration stone (see below), while the inauguration stone of the kings of Munster at Cashel (an office sometimes held by the Eóganacht Glenomnach) was called Lecc Cathraigi.⁷¹ The barrow is by far the largest in the whole of Fir Maige (42 m diameter, 4.6 m high), more than twice the size of all but one of the others, and its impact is accentuated by its position on a bluff on the north bank of the kingdom's principal river, Abhainn Móire, in English the Blackwater. The prominence of Licklash in Críchad suggests the barrow may have retained some significance in the landscape, at least as a landmark if not actively used for ritual. Abhainn Móire may mean 'The River of Mór [Muman]' who features very prominently in early Munster myths where, as if personifying a sovereignty goddess, she marries a number of consecutive kings of Munster, including at least two Síol Cathail ancestors of the Eóganacht Glenomnach.⁷² This would support the possibility that the Licklash barrow had some role in the construction of early medieval kingship.⁷³

⁶⁹ Monk, 'A Tale of Two Ringforts', *passim*.

⁷⁰ MacCotter, 'Túath, Manor and Parish', pp. 242–43.

⁷¹ *Dictionary of the Irish Language* at Lecc.

⁷² Mac Cana, 'Aspects of the Theme', *passim*. O'Nolan, 'Mor of Munster', *passim*.

⁷³ I am grateful to Patrick Gleeson for this point.

If so, part of its appeal may have been that it marked the northern boundary of a piece of land south of the Blackwater known as Féic. The importance of Féic is indicated by the fact that, in an unusual arrangement, it was retained as a detached portion of Eóganacht Glenomnach, extending into Túath Uí Chonaill, after Uí Máille Machaire had separated from Eóganacht Glenomnach (Map 4.5). Its importance is underscored by the fact that 'Féic' seems to have been used as an alias for the home *baile* of the Eóganacht Glenomnach around Glanworth (Magh bhFece) and for their whole kingdom.⁷⁴ On current evidence Féic itself was a sparsely settled area, with even fewer settlements than in the adjacent ecclesiastical *baile* of Ballynoe (see below), despite the fact that the land is good. Apart from Clondulane church, we know of only one possible early medieval settlement and this seems to have been high status. In Gearagh, which faces Licklash across the Blackwater, are three enclosures indicated by cropmarks, one of which may have been an unusually large bivallate ringfort.⁷⁵

Féic is associated with the Síl Cathail in two episodes of *Conall Corc and the Corcu Loígde* which dates to c. 700.⁷⁶ Both involve the Uí Liatháin, a group whose lands lay immediately outside of Fir Maige to the south, and one describes conflict between them and Síl Cathail. The exact extents of Féic are not known for certain, but this episode suggests it may have extended to the southern boundary of Fir Maige which is delimited by low hills. This possibility is supported by the fact that, according to Críchad, the boundary of Féic 'is as runs the road leading from Airgetlaid to Cnocan Duin Martan'.⁷⁷ Airgetlaid is the Araglin River which joins the Blackwater just opposite Carrigatoortane which was certainly in Féic.⁷⁸ Cnocan Duin Martan suggests a fort or enclosed place on a low hill.⁷⁹ In Ballynafauna, due south of the junction of the Araglin and Blackwater, on a low unnamed hilltop marking the southern boundary of Fir Maige, is an unusual enclosure (Figure 4.4).⁸⁰ It is D-shaped and stone-

⁷⁴ MacCotter, 'Túath, Manor and Parish', p. 239.

⁷⁵ *Archaeological Inventory*, iv, 400.

⁷⁶ MacCotter, 'Túath, Manor and Parish', p. 239.

⁷⁷ Power, *Críchad*, p. 51.

⁷⁸ MacCotter, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 266.

⁷⁹ *Dictionary of the Irish Language*.

⁸⁰ Ballynafauna adjoins Clondulane which we know was in Féic. It is worth noting that a road, which serves as the boundary of several townlands, runs from a short distance east of the Ballynafauna enclosure to Clondulane and then to a point (in Bettysville) immediately opposite the junction of the two rivers. In the other direction the road leads to Coole, one of the major church sites of the Uí Liatháin, two kilometres south of the enclosure.

faced, 80 m × 64 m. Abutting the straight side, at the north, facing Fir Maige, is a large semicircular platform. By contrast, the curving south side, which faces Uí Liatháin, comprises two banks and is more exclusionary in character, resembling a more conventional defensive earthwork. It was known locally as the 'Fort of the Assembly'.⁸¹ Whether or not it is Duin Martan, its form and position support the possibility that the local name for it preserves some memory of its original function. Thus we have three possible assembly sites associated with the Eóganacht Glenomnach (Killeagh, Caherdrinny, and Ballynafaua), and the archaeology accords with the historical evidence that this detached portion of their *túath* was of strategic and perhaps symbolic importance to them.

Assuming that Licklash had royal associations, it is interesting that the *túath* church of Uí Máille Machaire, Kilcrumper, was in Ballyhindon, an adjoining *baile* listed immediately after Licklash. Presumably Kilcrumper had been made a *túath* church relatively recently when the two *túatha* separated. Near the northern boundary of Uí Máille Machaire was Ballyclogh church, and MacCotter has made a strong case that this was Cell Cromglaise ('Church of the Crooked Stream') (Map 4.4). In *Conall Corc and the Corcu Loigde* (c. 700), Coirpre Crom (d. 580), king of Munster and ancestor of the Eóganacht Glenomnach, is said to have been buried there, and according to later sources he had been fostered there in his youth by an otherwise obscure cleric, Scellán.⁸² This would make Ballyclogh the earliest documented church in Fir Maige. It is not a *túath* church in Críchad but that may be because it had another role based on its particularly close association with the Eóganacht Glenomnach. The townland of Ballyclogh abuts the royal *baile* of Eóganacht Glenomnach, and the church is just as close to it as Killeenemer is (<1 km). Ballyclogh is also the closest church to the *baile* of the *taisech* of Uí Máille Machaire (Cornhill; c. 1 km),⁸³ and assuming this included Ballynahow townland, the two *bailte* were contiguous. Ballyclogh therefore suggests itself as a 'royal proprietary church' of Eóganacht Glenomnach, especially if we accept that the Killeagh/Dunmahon enclosure was not ecclesiastical. The idea that Ballyclogh and Cornhill were originally part of the core of Eóganacht Glenomnach is supported by the fact

⁸¹ Windele, 'Windele Manuscripts', p. 57.

⁸² MacCotter, 'Túath, Manor and Parish', pp. 220, 238–39. The evidence in favour of Ballyclogh is very strong, though Gleeson has suggested Erry, Co. Tipperary, as a possible alternative candidate for Cell Cromglaise: Gleeson, 'Landscapes of Kingship', pp. 445–46.

⁸³ The likely early church in or around Labbacallee was possibly a little closer, but its exact location is unknown (see Table 4.1).



Figure 4.4. View from the south-west of the large enclosure at Ballynafauna on the boundary between Fir Maige and Uí Liatháin, known locally as the ‘Fort of the Assembly’.

Source: Cork Archaeological Survey Collection.

that Manning, the only Uí Máille Machaire *baile* (now townland) between Cornhill and the royal *baile*, has a remarkable cluster of ringforts, including four bivallates.

Elite Settlements and Churches in the Other Royal *Túatha*

Now we will consider more briefly the three other *túatha* with royal associations: *Túath Uí Chúsraid/Uí Chúsraid Sléibe*, *Uí Ingardail*, and *Mag Finn/Mag Uí Chatháin*. *Túath Uí Chúsraid/Uí Chúsraid Sléibe* originally formed a single *túath*, probably with Labbamolaga as *túath* church (Map 4.2). When they split apart, probably in the eleventh or early twelfth century, St Molaga’s ecclesiastical estate was divided between the two *túatha*, and a lesser foundation of Molaga, Aghacross, was made *túath* church of *Túath Uí Chúsraid*.⁸⁴ The first *baile* listed in *Túath Uí Chúsraid* is Liathmuine, now Cloghleaфин south-east of the ecclesiastical estate, which contained an unusually large (50 m) bivallate fort. Liathmuine was the residence of King Cuana mac Cailchín. It is mentioned in his contemporary death-notice (AT 643), and in later texts it is depicted as a

⁸⁴ Herbert, ‘Observations’, p. 130; MacCotter, ‘*Túath*, Manor and Parish’, pp. 252–55; Ó Carragáin, ‘The Archaeology of Ecclesiastical Estates’, pp. 284–86.



Map 4.5. The royal *túath* of Uí Ingardail and portions of adjacent *túatha* including the approximate area of the detached portion of Eóganacht Glenomnach. Some townland names are shown but not townland boundaries. The morphology of the unclassified enclosures shown here suggests they could be early medieval, though some might be for burial rather than settlement.

Map by Nick Hogan and Tomás Ó Carragáin.

place famous for royal hospitality where St Molaga was fostered as a boy.⁸⁵ The 'clogh' (cloch: stone) of the townland name possibly refers to the inauguration stone of Uí Chúscraid though this does not survive.⁸⁶ The early medieval mill in Curraghgorm may well have been within this royal *baille*.⁸⁷ Críchad locates the *tatsech* of Túath Uí Chúscraid in Kilclooney, but in the slightly earlier Life of Molaga, this was claimed as part of Molaga's ecclesiastical estate.⁸⁸ Perhaps this apparent contradiction between the two sources relates to the recent division of the *túath*. Críchad provides no information about elite *bailte* in Uí Chúscraid Sléibe because this territory was disputed between Fir Maige and a neighbour-

⁸⁵ Power, *Críchad*, p. 85; Ó Buachalla, 'Placenames of North-East Cork', 1950, p. 49.

⁸⁶ Bhreathnach, *Críchad an Chaoilli*, p. 89.

⁸⁷ Colin Rynne (pers. comm.) has determined that this mill is early medieval.

⁸⁸ Coill Chluana is Cluain MicCarthainn. Ó Buachalla, 'Placenames of North-East Cork', 1950, p. 49.

ing kingdom.⁸⁹ Perhaps in these circumstances it was necessary to move the *taísech* from Uí Chúscraid Sléibe and provide him with a new *baile* in Túath Uí Chúscraid. The idea that Kilclooney had become an elite *baile* relatively recently is supported by its lack of multivallate ringforts despite the fact that these are quite common in Túath Uí Chúscraid (see above). Given the possibility of recent changes in the status of Kilclooney and Aghacross, the most significant spatial relationship from our point of view is that between Liathmuine and Labbamolaga. They are six kilometres apart, rather than the usual circa two kilometres between elite *baile* and *túath* church (see above). This may be because Labbamolaga was a landed church first and foremost; the creation of its estate may have necessitated a greater distance between the church and its patrons. By contrast Liathmuine is about two kilometres from Aghacross, and its *baile* probably abutted that of Aghacross and therefore also abutted the ecclesiastical estate. On a day-to-day basis, residents of Liathmuine may have had more interaction with Aghacross even before it became a *túath* church.

Uí Ingardail extends to either side of a twelve kilometre stretch of the river Blackwater, running to the top of the Nagles Mountains at the south (Map 4.5). In the later medieval period the area was divided into four north–south oriented manors, ensuring relatively even division of different land types, and Críchad suggests a somewhat similar arrangement in early medieval times. The first *baile* listed is Conva at the west end of the *túath*. It is referred to as ‘chief *baile*’, presumably in acknowledgement of the fact that, in the sixth century, this *túath* supplied most of Fir Maige’s kings (see above). Significantly, more than half (4/7) of the *túatha*’s multivallates are in Conva townland and the adjoining townland of Castleblagh, and there are also several unusual enclosures in this part of the *túath*. For example partial excavation unexpectedly showed that one or two rectilinear enclosures with associated pits date to around the seventh or eighth centuries when the vast majority of settlement enclosures were curvilinear.⁹⁰ In Castleblagh a large enclosure, 86 m in diameter, has a linear avenue (28 m) leading to its entrance at the north/north-east.⁹¹ If this is early medieval one would be tempted to suggest it as a venue for ceremonies of kingship, which often progressed along avenues on a north-east–south-west axis.⁹² It is 200 m from a bivallate fort and overlooks Ballyhooly church in Conva,

⁸⁹ MacCotter, ‘Túath, Manor and Parish’, pp. 243–44.

⁹⁰ Doody, *Ballyhoura Hills*, pp. 589–605, 702–04.

⁹¹ Lee, ‘Some Notes on the Districts’, pp. 25–26; *Archaeological Inventory*, IV, 396.

⁹² See Gleeson, ‘Constructing Kingship’, *passim*.

700 m to the north-east. While this church may have had its own *baile*, it must have had a close relationship with the local aristocracy. In Críchad it is called 'An Martra alias Áth Ubla', suggesting either that it was founded by an unnamed martyr (i.e. an exemplary Christian),⁹³ or that it acquired relics of a martyr, possibly through the patronage of the kings in Conva.

The *baile* of the *táisech* is centrally located around Cregg and includes a bivalent ringfort and probably also the large univallate (46 m) in Templnoe. These two townlands also contain cropmarks of three trivallate enclosures which, whether they are ring-ditches, barrows, or ringforts, underscore the importance of this *baile*. The extant bivallate ringfort was next to a linear barrow cemetery, and aerial photography suggests it may have been built over a barrow.⁹⁴ This would be an unusual sequence, and if the barrow was visible when the ringfort was constructed, it suggests appropriation of its mystique for symbolic reasons, the sort of conscious manipulation of the past particularly associated with the elite. The Nagles Mountains peter out near the south-east corner of the *túath* creating a natural point of entry into Fir Maige, which in late prehistoric times was controlled by Carntigherna, a hillfort encircling the terminal conical hill of the range. Unlike Caherdrinny (see above), it is not mentioned in Críchad and there is no archaeological evidence for medieval reuse.⁹⁵ In the nineteenth century, however, there was a tradition that Carntigherna was an assembly/inauguration site,⁹⁶ and one of the hills further along the ridge is Knockananig, which may mean 'Hill of the Óenach' (i.e. of the assembly).⁹⁷ It is possible, therefore, that assemblies took place on one or another of these mountains, though whether they were solely for *Túath Uí Ingardail* or had a wider role is unclear.

Cill Conáin (Ballynoe), the *túath* church, is close to Carntigherna, but it is eight kilometres away from the royal *baile* of Conva at the opposite end of the *túath*. In this regard, and in some other respects, it is more akin to landed churches like Labbamolaga or Brigown than to a typical *túath* church. The estates of these two landed churches have relatively few ringforts, perhaps in

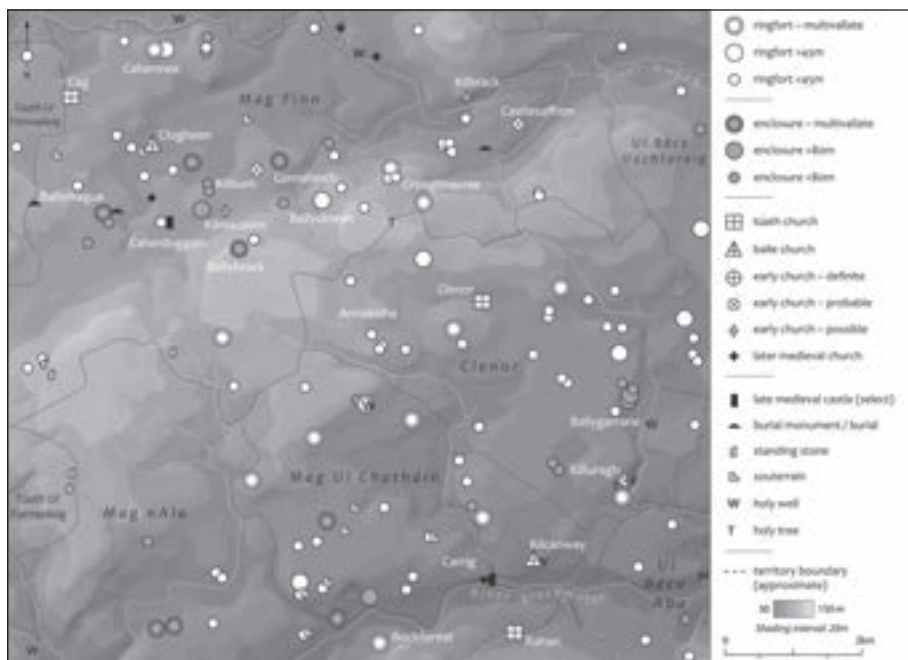
⁹³ Stancliffe, 'Red, White and Blue,' passim.

⁹⁴ *Archaeological Inventory*, IV, 259.

⁹⁵ Doody, *Ballyhoura Hills*, pp. 548–55.

⁹⁶ Fitzpatrick, *Royal Inauguration*, p. 88.

⁹⁷ Patrick Gleeson, pers. comm. There was a curvilinear enclosure on the summit of the hill (now levelled), and a mass rock next to this is still the focus of a pilgrimage around 15 August. This date raises the possibility that the pilgrimage originated as an assembly coinciding with the ancient festival of Lughnasa. See MacNeill, *The Festival of Lughnasa*, pp. 24–25, 98, 215, 216, 224, 361, 636, 637.



Map 4.6. The royal *túath* of Mag Finn, Mag Uí Chatháin, the ecclesiastical estate of Clenor, and portions of adjacent *túatha*. Some townland names are shown but not townland boundaries. The morphology of the unclassified enclosures shown here suggests they could be early medieval, though some might be for burial rather than settlement.

Map by Nick Hogan and Tomás Ó Carragáin.

part because of distinctive farming practices.⁹⁸ Similarly compared to the other *bailte* of Uí Ingardail, Cill Conáin has few ringforts, and the nearest settlements are unenclosed souterrains. Another characteristic Cill Conáin shares with the landed churches is that it is the principal foundation of a specific founder. This is unusual for *túath* churches without ecclesiastical estates (see below). The locations of adjoining Críchad place names suggest that the *baile* of Cill Conáin was relatively large, perhaps comprising the eastern portion of Uí Ingardail on both sides of the Blackwater (c. 16 km²). If so it was not much smaller than the estate of Labbamolaga. Immediately to the west was Coolroe, probably the site referred to as ‘An Reiclés’ in Críchad. This name derives from the Latin *reclusum*.⁹⁹ Coolroe therefore suggests itself as an eremitic retreat,

⁹⁸ Ó Carragáin, ‘The Archaeology of Ecclesiastical Estates’, pp. 277–80, 286–88.

⁹⁹ Paul MacCotter, pers. comm.; *Dictionary of the Irish Language*.



Figure 4.5.
Probable ecclesiastical
enclosure twinned with
an unusually large ring-
fort at Ballyguyroe South.
Source: Cork Archaeo-
logical Survey Collection.

something commonly found in the vicinity of important churches associated with saints.¹⁰⁰ For example, some distance from Clenor, Cránaid's principal church, was her retreat, Díseart Cránadan, which may be at Castlesaffron (Map 4.6). It is possible, then, that Conán was the patron saint of Uí Ingardail and that the *baile* of his church was considered an ecclesiastical estate, rather than the modest landholding of a typical *túath* church. This would make sense considering that all the other royal *túath* had an associated ecclesiastical estate. If so the main difference was probably that, due to the early and steep decline in the fortunes of Uí Ingardail's kings, Conán did not become a famous patron saint (*érlam*) of Fir Maige. Nothing is known about him, and there is no hagiography like that which documents the estates of Fir Maige's three most important saints. The decline of his church was so precipitous that it is one of just three *túath* churches that seems to have fallen out of use in the later medieval period (Table 4.2). This decline was probably hastened by the establishment,

¹⁰⁰ See, for example, Ó Carragáin, *Churches*, pp. 268–69.

in 1170 not long after the composition of Críchad, of the most important later medieval monastery in Fir Maige, the Cistercian Abbey of Fermoy.¹⁰¹ The abbey was within the former *baile* of Cill Conáin, which became its core estate.¹⁰² The sometimes antagonistic attitude of the Cistercians towards earlier settlements on their estates should be remembered in this context.

Mag Finn was the royal *túath* of the western half of Fir Maige, and the first *baile* listed is Cathair Dubacáin, seat of its kings, the Uí Dubacáin, a sept of the Uí Labrada (Figure 4.5). The bivallate in Caherduggan South must have been associated with the Uí Labrada but it may not be the *caher* (*cathair*: stone fort) itself, for no stone facing now survives though its outer bank has been largely removed.¹⁰³ There is a ringfort adjacent to the site of Caherduggan Castle, and it is possible that the latter replaced the *cathair*. The *baile* probably included the very large (87 m) enclosure of uncertain date in Kilmacoom, the levelled bivallate enclosure in Ballybrack, and possibly the unusually large univallate ringfort in Ballydineen and the levelled trivallate enclosure in Cornahinch. It may have included two but more likely one church, presumably the local church of the Uí Labrada. The more likely one is Kilburn, which we know had a church though its location is now forgotten. The other is the adjacent townland of Kilmacoom, but here we only have place-name evidence (the large enclosure mentioned above seems unlikely to be ecclesiastical) and, given their proximity, Kilmacoom may simply be an alias for Kilburn (Table 4.1). Neither is mentioned in the Críchad suggesting they formed part of another *baile*, most likely Cathair Dubacáin. The *baile* immediately to the north was named for another church, Cill Curnain (Clogheen), while north-west of that again was the *baile* of Cill Fhada (Lag), the *túath* church, less than two kilometres from the likely northern boundary of Cathair Dubacáin. Uí Duibh Trochmaeil were the *taísigh* of Mag Finn, but Críchad does not supply the name of their *baile*. They are mentioned immediately after Cill Fhada, raising the possibility that they were based immediately to the east around Cahermee, where there was a pair of unusually large ringforts. One of them, c. 60 m in diameter and bivallate, was located on top of a hillock with commanding views in all directions. Mag Uí Chatháin originally formed part of Mag Finn, and the most important church in this earlier, larger *túath* was St Cránaid's foundation of Clenor, which was granted an estate and also functioned as the *túath* church of Mag Uí

¹⁰¹ See Stalley, 'The Cistercian Monasteries', p. 244.

¹⁰² See MacCotter, *Medieval Ireland*, map 2.

¹⁰³ *Archaeological Inventory*, IV, 242.

Chatháin (Map 4.6).¹⁰⁴ Both Cathair Dubacáin and probably also the *baile* of the *táísigh* of Mag Uí Chatháin abut this estate. These *táísigh*, the Uí Domnaill Ceannmhuighi (close relatives of the Uí Dubacáin kings),¹⁰⁵ were based around Carrig, Kilcanway (Cill Ceannmhuighe) shares its name with these *táísigh* and must have been their local church. Though not mentioned in Críchad, it may be an alias for Cill Cuili, an unidentified site near here which had its own *baile*, possibly corresponding roughly to Kilcanway townland. While there is a bivallate ringfort in Kilcanway, near the boundary with Carrig, the principal residence of the *táísigh* may alternatively have been on or near the site of the late medieval castle of Carrigleamleary, for their *baile* was named for the rock on which this was built (Carrag Leme Laeghairi in Críchad). If so, it was less than a kilometre from Kilcanway church and about four kilometres from the *túath* church of Clenor.

Elite Settlements and Churches in the Non-Royal *Túatha*

It remains to outline the evidence for elite settlements and churches in the seven *túatha* without strong royal associations. The *baile* of the *táisech* of the relatively mountainous *túath* of Mag nAla has not been identified, but it may have included the only bivallate in the *túath* at Rockforest West, which is about two kilometres from Rahan (Dromrahan), the church of most of this *túath* (Map 4.6).¹⁰⁶ The *táisech* of Uí Béce Aba was based at Dun Cruadha, now the site of an Anglo-Norman castle, Castletownroche. There is a possible early church, Sleemana, next to the castle. Kilcummer, the *túath* church, is two kilometres to the south, its *baile* probably adjoining that of Dun Cruadha.¹⁰⁷ Uí

¹⁰⁴ MacCotter, 'Túath, Manor and Parish', pp. 255–57.

¹⁰⁵ Bhreathnach, 'Críchad an Chaoilli', p. 92.

¹⁰⁶ Clenor was the church of part of Mag nAla (see above), but not the part which included the *baile* of the *táisech*. Therefore if Rockforest was in the Clenor part of Mag nAla the ringfort could not be associated with the *táisech*. The likelihood, however, is that the Clenor portion was in the north-west of the *túath* because Rahan is situated in the north-east. The Clenor portion may well be the area of Mag nAla north of the river Blackwater. In any case it did not include Ballymagooly (Baile Uí Mhulghuala), just west of Rockforest. It remains quite possible, therefore, that the *táisech* was based in the vicinity of the bivallate ringfort in Rockforest.

¹⁰⁷ While there are no extant multivallate ringforts in the *túath*, there is a levelled bivallate enclosure of ringfort size on the opposite side of the river from Kilcummer, while in Kilcummer Lower is a levelled 90 m diameter enclosure which, if early medieval, may represent a settlement associated with the church site.

Béce Uachtaraig was apparently in the process of separating from Uí Béce Aba at the time Críchad was composed. None of its churches had yet been made *túath* church, but it did have a *taisech*.¹⁰⁸ The *baile* of the *taisech* was a large area at the centre of the *túath* encompassing Sonnach at the north of the river Awbeg and Lochquin at the south. It must therefore have included the possible churches at Clogher Demense and Wallstown and was adjacent to the probable churches at Skenakilla and Naglesborough. The only definite bivallate in the *túath*, at Carrigleagh, was in another *baile*, but within the *baile* of the *taisech* are levelled bivallate enclosures, in Wallstown and Knockacappul, that might have been ringforts.¹⁰⁹ We do not know whether the *taisech* of the earlier larger Uí Béce *túath* was based here or in Dun Cruadha.¹¹⁰

The *taisech* of Tuath Uí Chonaill was around Leitrim, far from the only extant bivallate in the *túath* in Billeragh East. Leitrim is much closer (*c.* 2 km) to the *túath* church of Kilworth, though separated from it by the Araglin River and by the *baile* of Ballyderown. The possible church in Macronev may have been associated with the *taisech*; it was probably in the adjacent *baile*, less than a kilometre from the border with Leitrim. Críchad treats of the remaining three *túatha* in a cursory manner, so we cannot use it to identify the *bailte* of their *taísigh*, or indeed any others. There are no multivallates in Túath Uí Fiannadaig. The only multivallate in Túath Uí Rosa is just 700 m from a possible church at Rossagh (Rosach na Righraidhi: a non-ecclesiastical place name with aristocratic connotations), which is twinned with a large univallate ringfort.¹¹¹ The *túath* church, Kilcolman, is more than two kilometres away. The only multivallate (in fact a trivallate) in Túath Uí Duinnin is in the same townland as Farahy, the *túath* church. While it would be unusual for the residence of the *taisech* to be in the same *baile* as the *túath* church, they are at opposite ends of the townland, 1.5 km apart. The multivallate is about the same distance from the only other probable church in the *túath*, Ballyguyroe. At much closer quarters, each church is twinned with an unusually large univallate ringfort.

¹⁰⁸ MacCotter, 'Túath, Manor and Parish', p. 247.

¹⁰⁹ *Archaeological Inventory*, iv, 426, 429. The *baile* of the *taisech* probably also incorporated the large ringforts in Doonawanty and Ballydaheen. The bivallate in Carrigleagh was probably in the *baile* of Daire Hí Cheinnéidig. MacCotter, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 268.

¹¹⁰ In Críchad the *taisech* of Uí Béce Uachtaraig is considered superior to that of Uí Béce Aba, but it does not necessarily follow that the former office is older.

¹¹¹ Monk, 'Early Medieval Secular and Ecclesiastical Settlement', p. 44.

Elite Settlements and Churches: Overview

The first general conclusion arising from this analysis is that, in many cases, there is a correlation between multivallate ringforts and the elite *bailte* enumerated in Críchad (Table 4.3). There is at least one, and sometimes several, multivallate ringforts in all four definite royal *bailte*. Licklash, a fifth *baile* with possible royal associations, has a large barrow instead, but it is atypical because its *túath* probably once formed part of Eóganacht Glenomnach, and its association with those kings may have been in the symbolic/ritual (rather than the domestic) sphere.¹¹² Of the seven *bailte* of *taisigh* that we can identify with certainty, two or three (if we include Kilcanway) have at least one multivallate. Of the remainder, a later castle overlies the likely residence of the *táisech* of Uí Béce Aba while there are levelled multivallates in the *baile* of the *táisech* of Uí Béce Uachtaraig; and in any case one of these two offices was only established in the twelfth century. Similarly the *baile* of the *táisech* of Túath Uí Chúscraid may have been moved shortly before Críchad was composed. This leaves just one elite *baile*, that in Túath Uí Chonaill, with no ready explanation for the lack of archaeological evidence for elite settlement. Some of these exceptions may provide further evidence that the system of local administration described in Críchad was a dynamic one which changed significantly over the course of the early medieval period, while others may be due to the vagaries of survival. In many cases, however, it seems clear that the association of these *bailte* with the elite stretches back at least to the main period of ringfort construction (c. 600–850). This correlation also raises the possibility that some high-status ringforts remained in use as late as the twelfth century.

Túath churches are quite consistently (73% of the time) about two kilometres from the *bailte* of kings and *taisigh*, the only notable exceptions being *túath* churches that had (or may have had) substantial estates (see below). As discussed above, this circa two kilometre distance may be because these were important settlements with public functions and significant landholdings (*bailte*). Notwithstanding the distance between the settlements themselves, it is quite common for their *bailte* to be contiguous (7/13 cases; Table 4.3), or to have just one intervening *baile* between them (i.e. in Uí Maile Machaire, Túath Uí Chonaill, and Mag Finn). There is often another church closer to elite settlements, some of which might be characterized as elite proprietary churches. This is supported by place-name evidence in the case of Kilcanway. Other evidence

¹¹² Another possibility is that the thirteenth-century castle in this townland replaced an earlier elite residence.

linking these churches to the elite include the royal burial at Ballyclogh (Cell Cromlaise) and possibly relics at Conva.

Compared to other *túatha*, those with royal associations had a complex political geography. They had designated *bailte* for kings as well as *taisigh* and a concentration of multivallate ringforts indicating that a relatively high proportion of those living there were of noble and royal stock.¹¹³ They are also characterized by unusual sites that may have been foci for ceremonies involving kings. Some of the large enclosures at Killeagh, Caherdrinny, Ballynafauna, Castleblagh, and Kilmacoom might have been places of assembly and/or for corralling cattle tribute, while there are also hints of ceremonial activity at Licklash and Cloghleafin, possibly including inauguration. While it may not be representative, it is worth noting that most of our evidence for early medieval mills occurs in royal *bailte/túatha* (Curraghgorm, Ballykenly, Glenwood), as well as at important ecclesiastical sites.¹¹⁴ Also in Eóganacht Glenomnach (Ballinglanna North) is the largest specialized bloomsmithing operation known from early medieval Ireland (late seventh–ninth century), which may have incorporated water-powered hammers and/or bellows.¹¹⁵ The characteristic that distinguishes royal *túatha* most clearly in the ecclesiastical sphere is their association with churches, reputedly founded by saints, which were granted substantial ecclesiastical estates (Map 4.2).

Such landed churches tend to be relatively far from their patrons. For example the Brigown estate was established just east of Eóganacht Glenomnach, and most of its lands were probably granted by that group, though Brigown paid taxes not only to Eóganacht Glenomnach but to two other adjacent *túatha* also.¹¹⁶ Given the size of its estate, it is not surprising that the church is 7.5 km from the royal *baile* of Eóganacht Glenomnach. I have tentatively suggested that Cill Conáin (Ballynoe), *túath* church of Uí Ingardail, was also granted an estate, albeit a more modest one. This might help explain why it is relatively far

¹¹³ See Stout, *The Irish Ringfort*, p. 113.

¹¹⁴ On mills at ecclesiastical sites, see Ó Carragáin, 'The Archaeology of Ecclesiastical Estates', pp. 276, 280, 288. Apart from these, traces of an early mill were found at Ballylough, apparently an obsolete townland near Mallow in Mag nAla. Rynne, *Archaeology and Technology*, II, 325. Only major churches, nobles, and the highest grades of commoner had their own mills; members of the lower grades sometimes owned mills in common. Ó Corráin, 'Ireland c. 800', pp. 565–67.

¹¹⁵ Young, 'Archaeometallurgical Residues', pp. 123, 129.

¹¹⁶ Power, *Crichad*, pp. 45–47.

from the *baile* of the local kings (c. 8 km). Certainly the estates of St Molaga (Labbamolaga) and St Cránaid (Clenor) were carved from within the remaining royal *túatha*, the home territories of the groups from which these saints were said to derive. Labbamolaga's estate abuts the royal *baile*, but there is still a substantial distance (6 km) between the royal residence and the church site in the northern part of the estate. The relatively compact estate of Clenor abuts the *bailte* of both king and probably *táisech*, but the residences very tentatively identified for them above are five kilometres and four kilometres from Clenor church respectively.

Túath Churches, Lesser Churches, and the General Population

It was suggested above that some *túath* churches were given this role before the twelfth century. What else can be said about the character of these sites? *Túath* churches that had large ecclesiastical estates were said to be the principal foundations of a saint: Labbamolaga, Aghacross, Clenor, and possibly Cill Conáin (Ballynoe: see above). Interestingly, though, this was rare among other *túath* churches (2/9); and in many cases there is limited evidence that they were monastic in character, though some probably originated as such. Cill Colmáin Gréc (Kilcolman) was named for an otherwise unknown figure, 'Colmán the Greek', possibly suggesting a centre of learning.¹¹⁷ Críchad states that Killadda (Lag) was blessed (i.e. founded) by Mochaomhóg mac Congharbh, another obscure figure,¹¹⁸ and the family associated with the church is 'coarbial', a term meaning 'successor' or 'heir' of a saint. As MacCotter points out, the families of Kilcummer and Rahan were also coarbial,¹¹⁹ though no founding saint is mentioned in either case. Kilworth ('Church of the Ecclesiastical Order') is not the principal foundation of a saint, but its name suggests a monastic component and it is associated with Colmán of Lynn and Mochuda of Lismore, two important saints from outside Fir Maige, suggesting that their churches claimed some of its revenues.¹²⁰ Reputedly founded by Abán, another important saint from outside Fir Maige,¹²¹ the name of Cill Cruimthir, 'Church of the Priest' (Lisnasallagh), suggests a pastoral role. Similarly Farahy, which

¹¹⁷ *Dictionary of the Irish Language*.

¹¹⁸ Ó Riain, *Dictionary*, p. 461.

¹¹⁹ Paul MacCotter, pers. comm.

¹²⁰ Ó Riain, *Dictionary*, p. 197.

¹²¹ Ó Riain, *Dictionary*, p. 51.

is probably Cill Mainches, comes from *fairche*, an early derivation from the Latin *parochia*.¹²²

The limited evidence for monasticism at a significant number of the *túath* churches is something they share with the early domnach sites in other kingdoms. It supports the possibility that they were established, or later selected, to serve a particular role within their *túath*. This is not the place for a detailed discussion of pastoral care before 1100, but it seems unlikely that it was largely confined to tenants on ecclesiastical estates, as some of the documentary sources seem to imply.¹²³ At the same time, it is probably anachronistic to interpret *túath* churches as a proto-parish network. For one thing, weekly Mass attendance was probably uncommon, and for another the much more numerous lesser churches were more accessible to the majority (see below). Perhaps for most attendance at the *túath* church was an occasional event, for example on some important feastdays and public festivals involving the king and/or *táisech*.¹²⁴ In this regard they may have been, in some respects, analogous to assembly sites: places in the landscape which were periodically activated as foci for public gatherings.

It seems clear that ease of access was not the sole criterion when locating (or selecting) *túath* churches. If so, they should usually be near the centre of their *túath*, whereas most of them are located off-centre, though rarely on the *túath* boundary.¹²⁵ Clearly other factors were also important including perhaps, as we have seen, the establishment of a consistent spatial relationship with elite residences. At the same time, most *túath* churches would have been quite easy for most of the population to access. The density of settlements apart from churches (ringforts, enclosures, souterrains, etc.) varies considerably, with relatively low densities in mountainous and marginal *túatha* such as Túath Uí Rosa, southern Mag nAla, and Túath Uí Chonaill. By contrast, there is such a high density on the better land that wherever a church was located it would be within easy walking distance of a large number of settlements, often in several different *túatha*. It is therefore fairly meaningless to compare *túath* churches according to the absolute number of ringforts within an arbitrary catchment. Each *túath* had its church, so the question is to what extent was it accessible to

¹²² Paul MacCotter, pers. comm.; *Dictionary of the Irish Language*.

¹²³ Etchingham, *Church Organisation*, pp. 239–89; Ó Carragáin, ‘From Family Cemeteries’, p. 221.

¹²⁴ Cf. Wood, *The Proprietary Church*, p. 66.

¹²⁵ Ó Carragáin, ‘The Archaeology of Ecclesiastical Estates’, p. 288.

the bulk of the population within that *túath*. For example, while there are few settlements near Kilworth in *Túath Uí Chonaill*, this is true of the *túath* as a whole and Kilworth is located at the heart of the best land in the *túath*. Only four *túath* churches seem to be poorly positioned for access from the majority of known settlements: Ballynoe in *Uí Ingardail*, which as we have seen is unusually sited; Rahan (Dromrahan) in *Mag nAla*, which might help to explain why Clenor was give rights over part of this *túath* (see above); Ballybeg West in *Uí Fiannadaig*; and Kilcolman in *Túath Uí Rosa*. Even in these cases the distances involved are modest and the vast majority of settlements are within five or six kilometres of the *túath* church, which would represent about an hour's walk for an unimpeded able-bodied adult.

Sites that did not have '*túath* church' status were much more common (at least thirty-seven and up to fifty-nine examples), and like *túath* churches most were probably founded by the ninth century (see above). In this regard, the Irish situation is closer to that on the Continent than it is to England where, according to proponents of the minster model, most local churches were founded by local lords centuries after the minsters.¹²⁶ Some of these must have been more significant than others. One possible indication of this is whether or not the church gave its name to the *baile* in which it was situated, for this would suggest that it was the most important settlement therein, and may have controlled some or all of its land and resources. In the majority of the 'secular' *túatha* where *baile* names are specified in *Críchad* (7/11: 64%), one of the *bailte* (of which there are usually between six and nine in total) is named for a church site, in addition to the *baile* of the *túath* church. For convenience we might call these '*baile* churches' (Table 4.3). Of the four exceptions, *Tuath Uí Chonaill* is a small marginal *túath* with just five *bailte*, so the absence of a '*baile* church' is not surprising. It is possible that *Eóganacht Glenomnach* (none) and *Uí Béce Aba* (two) do not conform to this pattern partly because of recent reconfigurations/divisions of these *túatha* (see above). As one might expect, the termon of Brigown has the most *baile* churches (four), but the relatively large number in *Uí Ingardail* (three) is not so easy to explain. Otherwise, the general consistency of the pattern of one *túath* church and one *baile* church per secular *túath* is interesting, though there is no evidence that *baile* churches had an official status or function within the *túath*. In addition to these, each *túath* usually has between one and three other definite/probable churches, some of which are referred to as subdivisions of *bailte* in *Críchad*, and between one and three

¹²⁶ For example Wood, *The Proprietary Church*, pp. 33–74; Blair, *The Church*, pp. 368–425.

possible churches (Tables 4.1 and 4.3). It is difficult to gauge exactly the status and function of *baile* churches, compared to these other lesser churches. The most convincing candidates for 'elite proprietary churches' (namely Ballyclogh, Conva, and perhaps Kilcanway/Cill Cuili and Clogheen in Mag Finn) were *baile* churches, indicating that at least some *baile* churches were associated with the local elite.

It is also interesting that quite a high proportion of the non-*túath* churches named for particular individuals/founders were *baile* churches. In some cases the saints/founders are obscure or difficult to identify with certainty: Ceall Dá Naomh ('Church of Two Saints'), Cill Laisre (Bridgetown?), Killissane, Kilphelan, Kilshanny (all *baile* churches), Kilconnor, and Kilmacoom.¹²⁷ In contrast, Kilmaculla was a *baile* church dedicated to Mochuille, an important saint reputedly of Fir Maige stock but whose main foundation was at Tulla, Co. Clare.¹²⁸ Clondulane, located in the detached portion of Eóganacht Glonmnach (Map 4.5), was reputedly the nunnery of Flannaid, daughter of the seventh-century Uí Chúsraid king, Cuana mac Cailchín, but our source is a much later Life of Mochuda.¹²⁹ I have already mentioned possible ascetic retreats at Coolroe (a *baile* church) and Castlesaffron. While some of these examples may have been, to a greater or lesser extent, monastic, the majority of lesser churches were probably not monasteries in the conventional sense of the term. In the absence of definitive evidence, however, we should allow for variation in their character. For example, some could have been operated by a married priest, others by a small religious community.

A substantial number of the minor churches may have been associated with lesser kin-groups, as is sometimes suggested by their names: Cill Uí nGeibinnain, Kilvickanease (Cill Mhic Aonghais), and perhaps Killakane (Cill Uí Cháin), though this latter is on the lands of Brigown. Five churches are paired with unusually large univallate ringforts: Gortroe in Túath Uí Chúsraid, Ballyguyroe and Farahy in Túath Uí Duinnín (Figure 4.5), Rossagh in Túath Uí Rosa, and perhaps Dromdowney in Túath Uí Fiannadaig. Apart from Farahy, these are minor establishments, so the twin enclosures are unlikely to represent subgroups of large religious communities, as has been suggested in relation to

¹²⁷ Some of these are discussed in Ó Carragáin, 'The Archaeology of Ecclesiastical Estates', pp. 276–77. On the many St Laisres, see Ó Riain, *Dictionary*, pp. 389–90.

¹²⁸ Ó Riain, *Dictionary*, pp. 474–76.

¹²⁹ Ó Riain, *Dictionary*, p. 346.

large univallates on ecclesiastical estates.¹³⁰ Perhaps some were the residences of reasonably well-off families (possibly relatives of the *táisech* in the examples in Uí Rosa and Uí Duinnín: see above) who established these churches on their land. Royal *túatha* (which make up *c.* 42% of Fir Maige) have a slightly higher proportion of the 'definite/probable' churches than non-royal *túatha* (56%). The reasons for this could include the establishment of minor churches on the boundaries of some royal *túatha*, perhaps partly for political reasons (see below), and better documentation of royal *túatha*, an idea supported by the fact that when 'possible' early churches (with poorer documentation) are included, the proportion in royal *túatha* is reduced to 50 per cent. In any case, churches were clearly not concentrated within royal *túatha* to anything like the extent that multivallate ringforts were (86%: see above). Indeed, their *relatively* even distribution in well-settled parts of the landscape is a forceful illustration of the role of lesser landowners in the foundation and maintenance of local churches.

Conclusion

In this paper we have explored the role of churches within the centrifugal constellations of sites at which social power was exercised in early medieval Ireland, including assembly sites, inauguration sites, and other settlements and religious foci. In particular we have noted the positive correlation between one's social position on the one hand and the range and character of church sites one could patronize on the other. Especially before *c.* 900, Ireland was characterized by quite diffuse power structures. There were probably two hundred or more kings (sometimes there was more than one royal lineage within a local kingdom, as Fir Maige illustrates), and a relatively high proportion of the population was considered to be of noble stock. This is expressed, for example, by the relatively modest differences in investment between the ringforts of kings and those of lesser lineages. It is also expressed by the fact that, in contrast to England for example, minor nobles and perhaps even non-nobles were in a position to found churches, as we have just seen.¹³¹

In theory these minor churches were meant to be consecrated by a bishop, and must have had relationships with more important churches.¹³² It would be

¹³⁰ Ó Carragáin, 'A Landscape Converted', p. 140; Ó Carragáin, 'The Archaeology of Ecclesiastical Estates', pp. 280, 295.

¹³¹ Ó Carragáin, 'Cemetery Settlements and Local Churches', pp. 350–51.

¹³² Ó Carragáin, *Churches*, p. 168.

anachronistic, however, to view them as components of a planned church network rolled out by a centralized ecclesiastical hierarchy. In some cases, their foundation may owe more to bottom-up processes than to top-down ones. Landholders of modest means stood to benefit considerably by establishing such sites, not least because in doing so they were emulating kings and *tátsigh* and distinguishing themselves from those who could not make such an investment. Because of their religious significance and because they combined crucial, mutually supporting functions (settlement, burial, ritual), church sites had the potential to become fixed points in the landscape. Kin-groups often had an uncertain hold on the land they farmed and the status that came with it. The foundation of a church site was a public manifestation of social position and tenure, which could help to anchor them more securely.¹³³ The role of a church site in this regard was periodically reiterated when it acted as a venue for solemnized rites of passage. Over time church sites became repositories both for kin-group memories of such events and for the physical remains of dead generations, which themselves were a powerful expression of tenure.

Tátsigh, the aristocratic rulers of *túatha* (the main subdivisions of a kingdom), had greater choice when it came to patronizing churches. In addition to possible 'proprietary' churches such as Kilcanway, the *táisech* also established or selected the designated *túath* church, an important local institution. The public ceremonies that took place at these sites must have helped to bed-down and/or reaffirm the position of the *túath* as a local district with a distinct identity and the role of the *táisech* as its ruler. We do not know for certain when the designation 'túath church' originated, but their role probably changed over time. In twelfth-century Fir Maige *túath* churches were attempting (with uncertain success) to usurp the functions of lesser churches within their *túatha*. This may have reinforced the authority of *tátsigh* over lesser kin-groups. Sometimes, however, royal lineages undermined the *táisech*'s control over the *túath* church, as we shall see.

Kings of course had a much wider range of options. The Fir Maige evidence shows that, rather than focusing their resources on one or two important churches, they chose to patronize several establishments, each of which had a particular role to play in underpinning and extending royal authority. Not all kings were equal, however. Apart from outstanding documentary coverage, one of the things that makes Fir Maige particularly interesting from the point of view of our theme is that it was the home territory, not only of local

¹³³ On this issue, see the essays by Juan Antonio Quirós and Igor Santos and by José Carlos Sánchez-Pardo in this volume.

Fir Maige kings, but also of their Eóganacht Glenomnach overlords who, especially until the ninth century, were sometimes recognized as kings of Munster. This group had extensive interests outside Fir Maige and were patrons of Emly, Co. Tipperary, and Cloyne in south Cork.¹³⁴ These were among Munster's most important churches, much more important than any in Fir Maige, so patronizing them was crucial to the wider provincial ambitions of the Eóganacht Glenomnach.

Within Fir Maige, the most important churches patronized by kings were conceived of as the principal foundations of the kingdom's patron saints, and each was granted a substantial estate. Land grants, it seems, were a vital part of the contractual relationship between kings and the patron saint(s) (*érlam*) of their kingdoms which was seen as crucial to its prosperity.¹³⁵ Alienating land to a church site did not necessarily mean giving up all rights to its resources, for the ecclesiastical families that ran these establishments were often close relatives of their patrons, and furthermore some landed churches such as Brigown had to pay tribute to their patrons. Establishing ecclesiastical estates had the added benefit of putting valuable resources beyond the reach of one's rivals. The royal pecking order is expressed by the fact that Brigown, which was associated primarily with the Eóganacht Glenomnach,¹³⁶ has a much larger estate than the landed churches of the local Fir Maige kings (Labbamolaga/Aghacross, Clenor, and possibly Ballynoe). Furthermore, while these latter churches doubled as the *túath* churches of the Fir Maige royal *túatha*, the *túath* of Eóganacht Glenomnach had a separate *túath* church, Killeenemer.

Unlike *taisigh*, kings did not limit their interests to churches within their home *túatha*. Críchad shows that they inveigled relatives into ecclesiastical offices at other *túath* churches as a way of reinforcing their authority over lesser *túatha*. In eastern Fir Maige the Eóganacht Glenomnach family of Uí Óengusa is associated with Kilworth and Aghacross, the churches of Túath Uí Chonaill and Túath Uí Chúscraid respectively. Similarly, families associated with the Uí Dubacáin kings of western Fir Maige based in Mag Finn turn up at Kilcummer, *túath* church of Uí Béce.¹³⁷ This replicates on a small scale a strategy developed by regional kings such as the Uí Briain in relation to major churches in their

¹³⁴ MacCotter, *Colmán*, pp. 50–62.

¹³⁵ Charles-Edwards, 'Érlam', *passim*.

¹³⁶ MacCotter, 'Túath, Manor and Parish', p. 251.

¹³⁷ MacCotter, 'Túath, Manor and Parish', pp. 242, 247.

vassal kingdoms.¹³⁸ Kings also founded and patronized lesser sites including proprietary churches near their residences and other sites, including perhaps minor monasteries (e.g. Clondulane), some of which were outside their home *túatha*. Elsewhere I have argued that some other lesser churches were placed on important boundaries at the behest of kings as expressions of dominion. One example is Kilcranathan (Gortnagross) which is dedicated to Cránaid, patron of western Fir Maige, and located exactly on its western boundary in Túath Uí Fiannadaig. Another is the series of churches on the boundary of Túath Uí Chúsraid/Uí Chúsraid Sléibe, which may be a conscious expression of the Christianization of this *túath* and a reassertion of its sovereignty in the face of increasing dominance by their neighbours to the south, the Éóganacht Glenomnach (Map 4.2).¹³⁹

While there is limited space to consider it here, the temporal dimension to all this should not be forgotten. Power structures in Ireland became somewhat more centralized over time, especially in the period *c.* 900–1170, and this affected church sites just as it did other settlements. More power was concentrated in the hands of stronger regional kings (in this case the Uí Briain and later Mac Cárthaig overlords of the Éóganacht Glenomnach, who by then rarely challenged for the kingship of Munster). With this came a more refined system of taxation in which the *túath* was the basic taxable unit.¹⁴⁰ The resulting downward pressure meant that some kin-groups lost their noble or royal status.¹⁴¹ Some of the minor Fir Maige establishments that apparently ceased to function as church sites may have been associated with such kin-groups (see above and Table 4.2).¹⁴² The attempts by kings to control *túath* churches in lesser *túatha* can also be viewed in this context, as can the attempts by *túath* churches to monopolize, or at least regulate, burial and related revenues, a development also bound up with the Gregorian reform (see above).

It would be reductionist in the extreme to consider church sites solely as mechanisms for leveraging and maintaining power. Among other things, they were also expressions of piety and religious and group identity, and places where both mundane interactions and life-changing events took place. Nonetheless,

¹³⁸ Ó Corráin, 'Dáil Cais', *passim*.

¹³⁹ Ó Carragáin, 'The Archaeology of Ecclesiastical Estates', pp. 288–92.

¹⁴⁰ For example MacCotter, *Medieval Ireland*, pp. 96–97.

¹⁴¹ See for example Doherty, 'The Vikings'.

¹⁴² Ó Carragáin, 'Cemetery Settlements and Local Churches', pp. 357–59; Ó Carragáin, 'From Family Cemeteries', pp. 222–24.

there *was* a relationship across early medieval Europe between the density and character of churches on the one hand and the varying concentrations of social power, both within and between societies, on the other. Christianity was adopted in different ways, and was subject to diverse interpretations, but it still represented a common field in which power relations could be negotiated. Church sites are therefore vital to our understanding of early medieval power structures, as this case study has attempted to show.

APPENDIX

Table 4.1. All possible medieval church sites in Fir Maige classified according to the likelihood of an early medieval origin. Table compiled in collaboration with Paul MacCotter and John Sheehan. Some grid references are approximate to the townland. References have been kept to a minimum. Relevant antiquarian sources are usually given in the Archaeological Inventory of County Cork. For later medieval parishes, see MacCotter, ‘Túath, Manor and Parish’, pp. 4–24. Unless otherwise stated toponymic information is from the Placenames Database of Ireland. ‘Críchad place name’ denotes a site referred to in Críchad in Chailli though not explicitly as a functioning church site. ‘Críchad *baile* name’ denotes a site for which a *baile* was named, though again it is not explicitly referred to as a functioning church. Church sites with little or no evidence for an early origin are represented on the maps as later medieval churches. Abbreviations: children’s burial ground (CBG), burial ground (BG), Placenames Database of Ireland (PDI). Source: <<http://www.logainm.ie/en/>> [accessed August 2012].

| Townland | Parish | Irish Nat. Grid Ref. | Early Origin | Notes |
|-------------------|---------------|----------------------|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Aghacross | Aghacross | 173332, 111711 | definite | Críchad: Áth Cros Molaga, church of Túath Uí Chuscraid. Romanesque church. |
| Ballybeg West | Buttevant | 153844, 106615 | definite | Críchad: Cill Cluaise, church of Túath Uí Fiannadaig. Site with ‘circular fense’. No trace. |
| Ballyclogh | Glanworth | 179143, 103994 | definite | Críchad <i>baile</i> name: Cell Cromglaise. Assoc. St Scellán, Síol Cathail (see main text). Ruined rectory chapel. |
| Ballydeloughy | Ballydeloughy | 175169, 109257 | possible | Críchad place name: Loch Arda O Cillin. Not necess. an eccl. name. O’Cillin family name? Ballylough parish church. |
| Ballyduff | Monanimy | 167426, 98140 | possible | Local names: Killernan, Cill Bhranna (3rd edn OS map). Ruined chapel-of-ease. |
| Ballyellis | Wallstown | 167889, 106087 | possible | Local name: Killelly. Parish church. Exact location unknown. Burials, souterrain in townland. |
| Ballyguyroe South | Farahy | 167404, 110621 | probable | Local name: Ard na Killeen. Likely ecc. encl. (c. 108m × 96m). No evidence for later use. |
| Ballylegan | Glanworth | 174650, 106550 | no evid. | Rectory of Legan. Exact location unknown. |
| Ballymaclawrence | Killathy | 174361, 97414 | definite | Local name: Kilmore. Oval encl. (c. 72m × 60m) with burials, souterrain, and bullauns. |
| Ballymacmoy | Monanimy | 164668, 99431 | possible | Killavullen village: Cill an Mhuillinn (‘church of the mill’). Modern church. |
| Ballynalacken | Leitrim | 187477, 100530 | no evid. | Leitrim parish church. |
| Ballynoe | Fermoy | 180251, 96715 | definite | Críchad: Cill Conáin, túath church of Uí Ingar-dail. No visible surface trace. Bullaun nearby. |

| Townland | Parish | Irish Nat. Grid Ref. | Early Origin | Notes |
|---------------------|-----------------|----------------------|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ballyvoddy | St Nathlash | 171744, 107991 | possible | Críchad place name: Echlasca Molaga. Not eccl. placename but Molaga assoc. suggestive. Ballynahalisk parish church. |
| Ballyvoskillakeen | Kilcrumper | 181025, 100990 | possible | |
| Baunnanooneeny | Marshallstown | 174315, 114739 | probable | |
| Boherash | Glanworth | 175736, 104146 | no evid. | Glanworth parish church near castle. |
| Bridgetown Lower | Bridgetown | 169232, 99760 | definite | Críchad <i>baile</i> name: Cill Laisre. A definite early site, though not definitely here on site of this Augustinian priory. |
| Brigown | Brigown | 182033, 111987 | definite | Críchad: Brí Gobann church with large estate. Round tower (fell 1720), pre-Romanesque church, poss. encl., holy wells. |
| Caherduggan North | Caherduggan | 156812, 105630 | no evid. | Caherduggan parish church (site of). |
| Carrig Demesne | Carrigleamleary | 161695, 100024 | no evid. | Carrigleamleary parish church (site of). Poss. Cill Cuili of Críchad, but this is more likely an alias for Kilcanway. |
| Carrigdownane Lower | Carrigdownane | 173120, 107217 | no evid. | Carrigdownane parish church. |
| Castlehyde East | Littir | 178539, 98793 | possible | Rectory of Temple Iogane. Poss. native dedication (Ógán) but temple element is late. Graveyard, modern church. |
| Castlesaffron | Doneraile | 162210, 106720 | probable | Díseart Cránadan in <i>Life of Cránaid</i> . A prob. early site, though not def. at this BG (MacCotter, 'Túath, Manor and Parish', p. 42). |
| Churchquarter | Kilbehenny | 186151, 115793 | definite | Críchad <i>baile</i> name: Cill Meithne. Large curvilinear graveyard. Holy well. Parish church. |
| Clenor north | Clenor | 161664, 104109 | definite | Críchad: Cleanuir, church of Mag Uí Chatháin. St Cránaid. Romanesque sculpture. East boundary curvilinear on 1st edn OS. |
| Clogheen | Caherduggan | 156815, 106416 | definite | Críchad <i>baile</i> name: Cill Curnain. Church and sub-circular graveyard (42m × 35m). Adjacent ringforts. |
| Clogher Demense | Templeroan | 166789, 107576 | possible | Parish church dedicated to St Ruadán (though temple element is late). Sub-circular graveyard (67m × 48m). |
| Clondulane South | Clondulane | 185307, 98728 | definite | Church of St Flannaid, daughter of Fir Maige king (see main text). Slight curvature of graveyard (3rd edn OS). |
| Cloonkilla | Kilgullane | 178566, 112355 | no | Cluain Coille (not cill). |

| Townland | Parish | Irish Nat. Grid Ref. | Early Origin | Notes |
|--------------------|---------------|----------------------|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Conva | Ballyhooly | 172885, 98975 | definite | Críchad <i>baile</i> name: An Martra alias Áth Ubla. Mentioned in Life of Mochuda of Lismore. Parish church of Ballyhooly. |
| Conva | Ballyhooly | 172710, 98987 | possible | Church here distinct from Ballyhooly in 1220s charter. |
| Coolroe | Littir | 177468, 97866 | definite | Glaunareglesia: probably An Reicléis in Críchad (<i>baile</i> name). Possibly eremitic. CBG. No clear evidence of later use. |
| Copsetown | Buttevant | 152632, 103341 | possible | Local name: Killeen Church suggesting CBG. Curvature of south and west graveyard on 1st edn OS. |
| Creggolympry North | Littir | 177421, 98544 | no evid. | Probably Littir parish church. |
| Derryvillane | Derryvillane | 173572, 107449 | possible | Parish church in irregular graveyard (c. 60m × 60m), somewhat curvilinear at south and west. |
| Dromdowney Lower | Dromdowney | 152549, 102270 | no evid. | Site of BG and prob. parish church. Holy well. |
| Dromrahan | Rahan | 162146, 99233 | definite | Críchad: Rathan, church of Mag nAla. Later parish church of Rahan. Possible holy well. |
| Dunmahon | Dunmahon | 177463, 105144 | no evid. | Parish church in D-shaped graveyard. |
| Farahy | Farahy | 168926, 110228 | probable | Críchad: may be Cill Mainches, church of Túath Uí Duinnín. Farahy (<i>fairche</i>) from parochia. Graveyard, church. |
| Fermoy | Fermoy | 181200, 98400 | no evid. | Cistercian abbey. |
| Garryhintoge | Cloustoge | 162977, 109473 | no evid. | Cloustoge parish church. |
| Glanworth | Glanworth | 175767, 103604 | prob. not | Templealour. Possible leper hospital. |
| Gortnagross | Ballyclough | 150465, 99278 | definite | Críchad: may be Áth na Ceall. Ecc. encl. (max. 240m) spans Gortnagross/Kilcranathan/Kilgobban. |
| Gortroe | Marshallstown | 177954, 115284 | possible | Local names: Cill Ruadh; An Faithchín, denoting atrium of settlement. No trace. D-shaped on 1st edn OS. Chapel-of-ease. |
| Horseclose | Doneraile | 160120, 107712 | no evid. | Prob. parish centre. |
| Kilbrack | Doneraile | 161445, 107113 | possible | An Choill Bhreac (rather than cill). D-shaped field reputed site of 'early church'. |
| Kilburn | Caherduggan | 158360, 106050 | probable | Cill Bhraín. Crossland of diocese of Cloyne. Location of BG forgotten. |

| Townland | Parish | Irish Nat. Grid Ref. | Early Origin | Notes |
|-------------------|------------------|----------------------|--------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Kilcanway | Carrigleam-leary | 162430, 100334 | definite | |
| Kilclogh | Macronev | 185060, 104020 | probable | Cill Cloiche. No trace of ecclesiastical remains. |
| Kilclooney | Templemolaga | 172819, 114882 | no | Coill Chluana (rather than cill). Previously confused with Kilclooney in Lee Valley. No recorded site. |
| Kilcolman West | Doneraile | 157500, 111300 | definite | Críchad: Cill Colmáin Gréc, church of Túath Uí Rosa. No site but c. 560 diam. curv. area, poss. souterrain (1st edn OS). |
| Kilconnor | Doneraile | 164526, 109589 | definite | Cill Conchúir. Poss. eccl. encl. and site of church. |
| Kilcranathan | Ballyclough | 150598, 100252 | possible | Account of circ. BG, church. No trace. Toponym may refer to site on border with Gortnacross. |
| Kilcummer Lower | Kilcummer | 169324, 100538 | definite | Críchad: Cill Cummuir, church of Uí Béce Uachtaraig. Ecc. encl. (120m × 89m), two late churches. |
| Kildorrery | Kildorrery | 170859, 110447 | probable | Cill Dairbhre ('Church of the Oak-grove'). Parish centre. |
| Kildrum | Brigown | 184233, 112385 | definite | Críchad <i>baile</i> name: Ceall Droma ('Church of the Ridge'), In Mairbhthir. Oval area 136m × 130m. Tradition of church. |
| Kilglass | Kilbehenny | 180395, 116600 | no evid. | An Choill Ghlas (rather than cill). It was the chapel of Glendowan (14th century), a name in Críchad. CBG. |
| Kilgullane | Kilgullane | 177412, 110789 | definite | Críchad place name: Ceall Ghalláin ('Church of the Standing Stone'; nearest one 1km NW). Late medieval parish church. |
| Killaclug West | Marshallstown | 178549, 113968 | definite | Cill an Chloig ('Church of the Bell'). No trace but sub-circular 'site of church' (38m) on 1st edn OS. |
| Killagrohan Lodge | Mallow | 152942, 99775 | no evid. | Cillín Ó gCruachán (rather than cill). Sub-circular CBG 25m × 26m. |
| Killakane | Brigown | 183694, 110882 | probable | Cill Uí Cháin. Antiq. account: 'circular fence foundations in a field called Lios-mhic-Cháin'. |
| Killally East | Kilworth | 183180, 103815 | no evid. | Coill Aille Thoir (rather than cill). CBG. |
| Killathy | Killathy | 174470, 99101 | definite | Críchad <i>baile</i> name: Ceall Aichedh. Later medieval parish church and graveyard. |
| Killeagh | Glanworth | 178150, 105826 | possible | PDI: An Choill Liath. Poss. eccl. encl. (164m) though see main text. Quern. Trivallate ringfort abutting. |

| Townland | Parish | Irish Nat. Grid Ref. | Early Origin | Notes |
|--------------------|---------------|----------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Killee | Marshallstown | 177614, 112650 | probable | Cill Liath. No trace. 1st edn OS: 35m × 28m oval graveyard, site of church. Curving road at south: poss. encl. |
| Killeenemer | Killeenemer | 177600, 107101 | definite | Críchad: Ceall Aenamnha, túath church of Eóghanacht Glenomnach. Early church. Ecc. encl. (190m), Bullaun. |
| Killetra | Mallow | 153473, 98302 | no evid. | An Choill Íochtarach (rather than cill). CBG. No trace. |
| Killissane | Monanimy | 165214, 102527 | definite | Críchad <i>baile</i> name: Cill Ossain. BG reported but no trace. |
| Killuragh | Clenor | 163770, 101420 | probable | |
| Kilmacoom | Caherduggan | 157895, 105438 | possible | Cill Mochuma. Poss. an alias for Kilburn in adjacent townland. No site recorded. |
| Kilmaculla | Kildorrery | 169846, 111606 | definite | Críchad <i>baile</i> name: Cill Mochuilli, i.e. Mochuille of Tulla, Clare (see main text). Eccl. encl. (90m × 60m), BG, bullauns. |
| Kilmurry South | Leitrim | 189173, 99604 | possible | Cill Muire. Circular graveyard (40m). Marian dedication late? |
| Kilnadrow | Kilgullane | 176580, 108350 | probable | Cill na d'Trua. BG in subcircular encl. now quarried. Poss. Kilcaragh of Down Survey. |
| Kilphelan | Kilphelan | 179370, 109281 | definite | Prob. the Críchad <i>baile</i> name Ceall Bracain. 60m D-shaped encl., site of church. |
| Kilquane | Bridgetown | 166660, 101750 | definite | Críchad place name: Cill Chúain. No site recorded. |
| Kilshanny | Brigown | 182590, 112953 | definite | Críchad <i>baile</i> name: Cill tShenaig. Antiq. record of destruction. |
| Kiltrislane | Kilphelan | 180609, 110343 | prob. not | Coill Trisleáin (PDI). Poss. Críchad place name Ceall Bracain but more likely this is Kilphelan 1km away. |
| Kilvickanease | Doneraile | 159752, 108699 | probable | Cill Mhic Aonghais. Poss. BG, curving field-boundary. |
| Kilworth | Kilworth | 183329, 102635 | definite | Críchad: Cill Úird ('Church of Eccl. Order'), church of Túath Uí Chonaill. Assoc. Lismore, Colmán of Lynn (see main text). |
| Labbacallee | Littir | 177405, 102000 | probable | Kilvaneton: obsolete local name in or near Labbacallee. Poss. rectory of Garraunigerinagh. No site. |
| Labbamolaga Middle | Templemolaga | 176319, 117670 | definite | Críchad: Eidhnen Molaga, church of Uí Chuscraid Sléibe. Encl. (140m), shrine-chapel, Rom. church, sculpt., bullaun. |
| Lag | Caherduggan | 155623, 107135 | definite | Críchad: Cill Fhada, church of Mag Finn. Assoc. with Mochaomhóg. Eccl. encl. (120m × 100m), church. |

| Townland | Parish | Irish Nat. Grid Ref. | Early Origin | Notes |
|----------------|------------------|----------------------|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Lisnasallagh | Kilcrumper | 180995, 100789 | definite | Críchad: Cill Cruimthir ('Church of the Priest'), church of Uí Máille. Assoc. with St Abán (see main text). Parish church. |
| Macronev Lower | Macronev | 185373, 102906 | possible | Críchad place name: Uam Croine ('Cave of Crón' or 'Tomb of Crón'), poss. eccl. name (cf. Uaimh Bhrennáin). Church, BG. |
| Mallow | Mallow | 156048, 98317 | no evid. | Prob. parish centre. |
| Marshallstown | Marshallstown | 174903, 111933 | no evid. | Parish church. |
| Mitchelstown | Marshallstown | 179354, 113725 | definite | Críchad <i>baile</i> name: Ceall Danain. Scribal error for Ceall Dá Naomh (local name: Kiltanave)? BG (35m × 25m), holy well. |
| Mitchelstown | Brigown | 180854, 113046 | probable | Poss. Kilcloghbane of Down Survey: i.e. 'cill' here or nearby. 1st edn OS: oval graveyard, church. No trace. |
| Monanimy Lower | Monanimy | 165192, 99982 | no evid. | Monanimy parish church. |
| Naglesborough | Castletown-roche | 167400, 104000 | probable | Local name: Árd Chill Fheichín. Pre-Norman dedication suggests an early church. No known site. |
| Newgrove | Glanworth | 175170, 107750 | little evid. | Local name: Cillín na nGall BG and associated holy tree, Crann na Cille (rather than cillín). No trace. Doubtful. |
| Oldcourt | Doneraile | 159589, 108135 | no evid. | Poss. original location of Doneraile parish church. |
| Parknakilla | Brigown | 186817, 113065 | possible | Páirc na (?)Coille (not cill) based on apparent lack of church (Ó Dálaigh, 'Logainmneacha', p. 29). Oval encl. 90m × 70m. |
| Renny Lower | Kilcummer | 161058, 98758 | no evid. | Prob. a rectory chapel. No trace. |
| Rossagh East | Doneraile | 158749, 109872 | possible | |
| Skenakilla | Castletown-roche | 165250, 104250 | probable | Sciath na Cille. Local trad. of church and BG. No trace. |
| Sleemana | Castletown-roche | 168481, 102459 | possible | Parish church. Sub-circular graveyard (60m). Curving road at south suggestive. Slí Mheánach. |
| Templenoe | Littir | 176468, 98971 | prob. not | Toponym ('New Church') suggests late date. |
| Wallstown | Wallstown | 166199, 107193 | possible | Parish church and graveyard. Patron suppos. Breanat (Beirchert?) brother of Cránaid (Ó Riain, <i>Dictionary</i> , p. 228). |
| Waterdyke | Templeroan | 166715, 109374 | possible | Church called 'Kilclagmusey' suppos. here. Cill local name but just one antiquarian source. No trace. |

Table 4.2. Classification of Fir Maige churches according to their fate in the later medieval period (cf. Table 4.1). Sites classified as lacking evidence for later medieval use may well have been used as burial grounds for unbaptized children (*cillíní*) and/or for popular devotions. For the purposes of this categorization we are interested solely in whether there was a functioning church as indicated by documentary references, archaeological evidence for a stone church (which in this area is likely to be later medieval), grave-markers for non-clandestine burials, or even a rectilinear graveyard with a modern wall (which would suggest continued use between the early medieval and modern periods).

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|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| Túath churches that later became parish churches Aghacross, Clenor, Dromrahan, Farahy (probably Cill Mainches), Kilcummer, Killeenemer, Kilworth, Labbamolaga, Lisnasallagh | 9 sites |
| Other túath church that continued in use Lag (rectory) | 1 site |
| Other Críchad churches that became parish churches Conva, Kilgullane, Killathy | 3 sites |
| Other Críchad churches clearly used in later medieval period Ballyclogh (rectory), Clogheen (parish church only in 17th century?), Kilphelan (rectory), Ballyvoddy (Echlasca Molaga; poss. early) | 4 sites (3 definite/prob.; 1 possibly early) |
| Other early churches that became parish churches Ballyellis (poss. early), Churchquarter (Cill Meithne), Clogher Demesne (poss. early), Clondulane, Derryvillane (poss. early), Kildorrery, Macronev (poss. early), Rossagh East (poss. early), Sleemana (poss. early), Wallstown (poss. early), Ballydeloughy (poss. early) | 11 sites (3 definite/prob.; 8 possibly early) |
| Other early churches probably used in later medieval period Ballyduff chapel-of-ease (poss. early), Bridgetown Lower (Cill Laisre poss. at site of Augustinian priory), Castlehyde Demesne (poss. early), Castlesaffron (private BG), Conva subsidiary church (poss. early), Copsetown (poss. early), Gortnagross (rectang. BG, poss. church foundations), Gortroe (chapel-of-ease, poss. early), Kilconnor (poss. church foundations), Kilcranathan (church foundations, poss. early), Killee (poss. church foundations), Kilmurry South (poss. early; modern graveyard wall), Labbacallee, Mitchelstown (Kilcloghbane of Down Survey?), Mitchelstown (Kiltaunave, rect. graveyard) | 15 sites (8 definite/prob.; 7 possibly early) |

Table 4.2. Classification of Fir Maige churches according to their fate in the later medieval period (*cont.*)

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| Túath churches lacking clear evidence of later medieval use Ballybeg West (Cill Cluaise), Ballynoe (Cill Conáin), Kilcolman West | 3 sites |
| Other Críchad churches lacking clear evidence of later medieval use Ballyvoskillakeen (possible site), Killisane, Kilquane, Kilshanny | 4 sites (3 definite/prob.; 1 possibly early) |
| Other churches lacking clear evidence of later medieval use Ballyguyroe, Ballymaclawrence (CBG?), Ballymacmoy (Killavullen: poss. early), Baunanooneeny, Coolroe (sub-rectangular BG), Kilbrack (poss. early; D-shaped field), Kilburn (no trace), Kilcanway (CBG, no trace), Kilclogh (no trace), Kildrum (trad. of church), Killaclug ('site of church' but no foundations marked), Killakane, Killeagh (poss. church), Killuragh, Kilmacoom (poss. early), Kilmaculla (CBG), Kilnadrow, Kilvickanease, Naglesborough, Parknakilla (poss. church), Skenakilla (trad. of church and BG), Waterdyke (poss. early) | 21 sites (16 definite/prob.; 5 possibly early) |
| Parish churches probably founded in the later medieval period Ballynalacken, Boherash, Caherduggan, Carrig Demesne, Carrig-downane, Creggolympry, Dromdowney, Dunmahon, Garryhintoge, Horseclose, Mallow, Marshalstown, Monanimy, Oldcourt | 14 sites |
| Other churches probably founded in the later medieval period Ballylegan, Fermoy (Cistercian), Glanworth (Templealour), Kilglass, Renny, Templenoe | 6 sites |
| Townlands listed in Table 4.1 that probably did not have a church (<i>not depicted on Map 4.2</i>) Cloonkilla, Kilclooney, Killagrohan Lodge, Killally East, Killetra, Kiltrislane, Newgrove | 8 sites |

Table 4.3. Summary of evidence for multivallate ringforts in the *bailte* of kings and *taoiseigh* (as enumerated in Críchad in Chailli) and of the spatial relationships between these *bailte* on the one hand and *túath* churches and closer churches on the other. Where possible, churches for which a *bailte* was named (*'bailte churches'*) and the number of additional churches in the *túath* are also given.

| ROYAL TUÁTHA | Multivallate ringfort | Distance to túath church | Túath church in adjacent bailte? | Closer church? | Adjacent or same bailte? | Distance | Bailte churches | Other churches |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Eóganacht Glenomnach (túath church: Killeenemer) | | | | | | | | |
| Royal bailte | Yes | <1km | Yes | Ballyclogh? | Yes | <1km | none | 1 def, 1 poss |
| Bailte of taiscech | n/a | | | | | | | |
| Uí Máille Machaire (túath church: Kilcrumper) | | | | | | | | |
| Royal bailte | No (barrow) | <2km | Yes | No | | | Ballyclogh | 1 prob, 1 poss |
| Bailte of taiscech | Yes | <3km | No | Ballyclogh | Prob. | c. 1km | | |
| Uí Ingardail (túath church: Ballynoe) | | | | | | | | |
| Royal bailte | Yes | c. 8km | No | Conva | Yes | <1km | Ballyhooly, Kilathy, Coolroe | 1 def, 1 poss |
| Bailte of taiscech | Yes | c. 4km | Prob. not | Coolroe | Yes | <1km | | |
| Túath Uí Chúscraid (túath church: Aghacross) | | | | | | | | |
| Royal bailte | Yes | c. 2km | Prob. | No | | | Kilmaculla | 2 prob, 2 poss |
| Bailte of taiscech | No | c. 2km | Yes | Baunnaoneeny | Yes | c. 1km | | |
| Uí Chúscraid Sléibe (Labbamolaga: probably túath church of both Uí Chúscraid túatha originally) | | | | | | | | |
| Royal bailte | Yes | 6km | No | Aghacross | Prob. | c. 2km from multivall. | | |

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CHURCHES AND SOCIAL ELITES IN EARLY MEDIEVAL TUSCANY: A QUANTITATIVE-STATISTICAL APPROACH TO THE EPISCOPAL ARCHIVE OF LUCCA

Roberto Farinelli

The Tradition of Archaeological and Historical Studies with Regard to Tuscan Early Medieval Churches

Historians and archaeologists have long debated the role of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the secular aristocracy in shaping early medieval Tuscan society.¹ The study of local churches is important to this debate; however, the positions of archaeologists and historians on this topic have followed such different paths that it is difficult to find an intermediate point for discussion. The present paper aims to introduce this debate and to explore new avenues for the dialogue between archaeologists and historians on the relations between churches and local society in Lombard Tuscany. In particular, we propose to take advantage of the huge potential of the Lucca Archive for this period by means of the quantitative analysis of the textual references to churches. This approach will help us to unveil some of the strategies of social power channelled by Lombard elites in this area through the foundation or endowment of churches.

¹ On early medieval Tuscan society, see Wickham, *The Mountains and the City*; Wickham, 'Aristocratic Power'; Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*. According to Richard Hodges's article 'L'elefante nel salotto', the role of episcopal churches is overestimated by the historiography; on the other hand, according to Gian Pietro Brogiolo's article 'Chiese e insediamenti', it underestimates the role of secular elites.

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Let us start with the contributions of the archaeologists. Medieval archaeology in Tuscany is intrinsically linked to the name of Riccardo Francovich, whose research interests were mainly focused on the study of rural settlement and society, especially in the south of the region.² For years, this late scholar and his students were only marginally interested in the study of churches, even when (as at Scarlino and Rocca S. Silvestro) the churches were actually part of the sites he was excavating. Richard Hodges describes this as like ignoring an 'elephant in the sitting room'.³ Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, however, Francovich's team has expanded its research interests to embrace the investigation of ecclesiastical structures and cemeteries. In this way they have linked with a strong tradition of archaeological study of churches and towns in the northern portion of the region, where baptismal churches ('plebes'), minor churches, castle churches, hospitals, and monasteries have been excavated and their fabric analysed. Building upon the results achieved in other regions, one of the key results of Francovich's survey is to show that, even in Tuscany, the seventh century marked the time when the Germanic — or Germanized — peoples abandoned their traditional burial customs. Then, the Church began to replace the family as the guarantor of the correct implementation of rites of passage, a process of the 'Christianization of death'.⁴

Moving away from archaeological survey, there is an exceptional wealth of documents relating to early medieval Tuscany, with which particular attention has been paid to the study of local churches. In particular, a number of documents relate to the beginning of a dispute between the bishops of Siena and Arezzo about ecclesiastical jurisdiction over a score of baptismal churches and some minor religious buildings in the monastic territory of the civil authorities of Siena. This has been used by historians to reconstruct the organization of the rural Lombard church up to *c.* AD 720.⁵ Furthermore, the high avail-

² In this first section, when possible, an English-language bibliography will be provided. A general overview of medieval archaeology in Tuscany (albeit paying scarce attention to church archaeology) is in Francovich, 'L'archeologia in Toscana'. It is significant that Tuscany is the only Italian region which is without a specific study in the comprehensive volume on the origins of rural parishes between the fourth and eighth centuries printed in the same year (Pergola, *Alle origini della parrocchia*). A summary of the research results in the Italian context with specific references to Tuscany can be found in Francovich, 'Changing Structures' and in Francovich and Hodges, *Villa to Village*.

³ The expression appears in Wood, *The Proprietary Church*, p. 237.

⁴ See Campana and others, *Chiese e insediamenti*, with relevant bibliography.

⁵ Violante, 'Primo contributo'; Violante, 'Le strutture organizzative'; Castagnetti, *L'organizzazione del territorio rurale nel Medioevo*; Settia, 'Pievi e cappelle'. See also recent work

ability and constancy in the diplomatic archives of Tuscany, both monastic and episcopal, have made it possible for historians to reconstruct the organization and life of some ecclesiastical and monastic centres during the eighth and ninth centuries.⁶

The picture emerging from these studies is unsurprising in its broad outlines. By the start of the war between the Goths and the Byzantine Empire (535–53) the Christianization of the region had been substantially completed. At this time the countryside of Tuscany was very thinly populated and was dotted with a small number of church buildings. Recent archaeological investigation has confirmed this picture, revealing that this network of baptismal churches had been substantially completed by the sixth century in the countryside. These few rural churches were nevertheless of remarkable size and architectural quality, comparable to those in urban areas.⁷

These baptismal churches, dependent on the bishop and traditionally invested with special religious functions, were placed at main nodes in the local and regional road network, or in significant or prominent places in the landscape.⁸ They were generally located on public property and were in places vulnerable to raids.⁹

by Azzara, 'Chiese e istituzioni rurali'; Azzara and Rapetti, *La Chiesa nel Medioevo*, pp. 75–84; Ronzani, 'L'Organizzazione territoriale', p. 200.

⁶ Analysis of the volumes of the *Codice Diplomatico Longobardo* (Schiaparelli, *Codice Diplomatico Longobardo*; Brühl, *Codice Diplomatico Longobardo*) — which comprises documents from the mid-seventh century to the Carolingian conquest of the Lombard Kingdom — reveals that around two-thirds of the documents came from Tuscan archives. For the specific case of Lucca archives, see Belli Barsali, 'La topografia di Lucca', p. 462, n. 3; Andreolli, *Uomini nel Medioevo*, pp. 9–10; Cammarosano, *Storia dell'Italia*, p. 115.

⁷ For north-central Italy, see Brogiolo, Cantino Wataghin, and Gelichi, 'L'Italia settentrionale'; Azzara, 'Chiese e istituzioni'; Brogiolo, *Le chiese tra VII e VIII secolo*; Azzara, 'Ecclesiastical Institutions'; Brogiolo, Chavarria Arnau, and Valenti, *Dopo la fine delle ville*; Brogiolo and Chavarria Arnau, 'Chiese, territorio e dinamiche'. For Tuscany, see Francovich and Valenti, 'Forme del popolamento altomedievale'; Wickham, 'Chiese e insediamenti'; Valenti, 'Le Campagne toscane', especially pp. 130–31.

⁸ Castagnetti, *La Pieve rurale*, pp. 50–65; Violante 'Le strutture organizzative'; Settia, *Chiese, strade e fortezze*; for some cases in Tuscany, see Moretti, *Pievi romaniche*, and Alberigi and Ciampoltrini, *Le acque e il vino*. See also Alexandra Chavarria's essay in this volume on the parallel case of the Garda region, in northern Italy.

⁹ Baptismal churches were often created in places with traditional public functions (Fournier, 'La mise en place', p. 499). These places were often ancient heathen sanctuaries that in the fifth century became fiscal patrimony and were later used for rural Christianization (Pricoco, 'Il cristianesimo da Damaso', pp. 622–23).

For centuries, this small number of late antique religious buildings was the heart of the system of pastoral care in the countryside.¹⁰

By the Carolingian period in north-central Italy, reform of this system of pastoral care was underway, under which a tithe had been paid to individual churches according to local custom. The new system was built around the ancient baptismal churches, called 'plebs'.¹¹ Each 'plebs' had other minor churches dependent on it.¹² Interestingly, the number of 'plebs' didn't undergo a significant increase during the period of important economic and population growth that characterized the eighth to twelfth centuries.¹³ The most visible changes in this new ecclesiastical system were small-scale topographical adjustments, including in the territory of Lucca.¹⁴

At the same time, from the beginning of the eighth century until c. AD 830, there was a significant growth in the number of 'private' foundations in Tuscany. These were established in both urban and rural contexts, and some were monastic in character.¹⁵ The legal basis for this significant increase has traditionally

¹⁰ One of the best studied areas, from an archaeological perspective, is Sabina: Mancinelli, 'Il "registrum omnium ecclesiarum"', pp. 3–16, 33–39, 80–82; Fiocchi Nicolai, *I cimiteri paleocristiani*.

¹¹ Violante, 'Le strutture organizzative', pp. 1012–18. See, more recently, Pellegrini, "Plebs" e "populus" in ambito rurale'; Andenna, 'Pievi e parrocchie'.

¹² Violante 'Le strutture organizzative', pp. 1054–78; Violante, 'L'organizzazione ecclesiastica'. Examples from the Lucca area are given in Nanni, *La parrocchia studiata*, pp. 48–64; Spicciani, 'Le origini della pieve'; Spicciani, 'Le istituzioni pievane e parrocchiali'; Giglioli, 'Una pieve rurale'; Spicciani, *Pieve a Nievole*; Spicciani, 'Questioni di confini'; Cantini and Salvestrini, *Vico Wallari*.

¹³ We agree with Luigi Nanni's statement that many 'plebs' — specifically mentioned with that name in medieval documents — were baptismal churches from the early Middle Ages, except some new churches that became 'plebs' in the tenth–eleventh centuries (Nanni, *La parrocchia studiata*, pp. 48–49, 59–65). See quantitative approaches made for the territory of the dispute between Siena and Arezzo in Francovich, Felici, and Gabbriellini, 'La Toscana'; Felici, 'Toscana'; Moretti, 'Aspetti dell'architettura', pp. 201–04; Felici, 'La contesa fra i vescovi di Siena e Arezzo'.

¹⁴ Normally, these adjustments were determined by the transfer of baptismal functions to nearby buildings, which could also assume the church's dedication. This was quite common at the end of the 'plebs system' and at the beginning of the 'parish system', between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. For some baptismal churches in Lucca this is suggested to have originated in the later ninth century (Nanni, *La parrocchia studiata*, pp. 59–64; Wickham *The Mountains and the City*, pp. 51–78; Puglia, 'Strategie vescovili, aristocrazie locali'; and Giglioli, 'La chiesa di San Frediano'). Significant studies in this direction have been undertaken for eleventh- to twelfth-century Sabina (Mancinelli, *Il 'registrum omnium'*, pp. 79–82, 84–86).

¹⁵ Feine, 'Studien zum langobardisch-italischen Eigenkirchenrecht', esp. 30, pp. 53–95;

been found in a royal edict of 713 which permitted donations *pro anima*, without other formalities, for 'Langobardus' men who were ill or infirm.¹⁶

This wave of private foundations had a number of motives: religious devotion, the consolidation and expression of rank and status, and the adoption of new funerary practices by members of the aristocracy.¹⁷ From the eighth century onwards, for example, the dead were no longer buried with their valuable possessions, which were instead distributed to the poor or donated to the church.¹⁸ The aristocratic politics of founding religious buildings on private land prevailed over the spiritual and material needs of other religious communities settled nearby.¹⁹ Even middling members of rural society promoted their status through the foundation of churches, establishing relationships with the urban ruling groups.²⁰

Some of these private and family foundations were monastic in character.²¹ They were wholly freed from the demands of pastoral care in their local territories and often lay outside episcopal control. They tried hard to fully achieve

Nanni, *La parrocchia studiata*, pp. 44–48; Boyd, *Tithes and Parishes*, pp. 252–54; Toubert, *Les structures du Latium*, p. 882; Conti, 'Il "monasterium", sacello di fondazione privata'. For comparison with Gaul, where two generations of rural churches have been identified with similar chronologies and features to Lucca, see Fournier, 'La mise en place', esp. pp. 498–511.

¹⁶ This link was pointed out by Wickham, 'Economic and Social Institutions', p. 20. For discussion of chapter 6 of the Edict of Liutprand in 713, see Azzara and Gasparri, *Le leggi dei Longobardi*, p. 130; Cortese, *Il diritto nella storia*, p. 139 n. 39; Gasparri and La Rocca, *Carte di famiglia*, pp. 97–98. On the Lombard Lucca, see Sinatti D'Amico, 'L'applicazione dell'Edictum', pp. 745–81, esp. pp. 755–64. On the religious foundations in Lucca before the Edict, see Nanni, *La parrocchia studiata*, pp. 23–24. On the chronology of donations 'pro anima/post obitum', see Holger Runsch, 'Genesi, diffusione ed evoluzione dei documenti', pp. 92–95.

¹⁷ Wickham, 'Economic and Social Institutions', pp. 23–26; Goetz, 'La circulation des biens', pp. 872–74; Brogiolo, 'Architetture, simboli e potere'; Provero, 'Progetti e pratiche dell'eredità', pp. 117–21; Stoffella, 'Aristocracy and Rural Churches', pp. 293–94.

¹⁸ La Rocca 'Le "élites"', Brogiolo, *Le chiese tra VII e VIII secolo*.

¹⁹ Wickham, 'Settlement Problems'; Wickham, 'Economic and Social Institutions'; Wickham, *L'Italia nel primo Medioevo*, pp. 113–14; Cammarosano, *Nobili e re*, pp. 80–83; Azzara, 'Chiese e istituzioni rurali', pp. 9–17; Azzara, 'Ecclesiastical Institutions', p. 90; Quirós Castillo, *Modi di costruire*, p. 105; Brogiolo, 'Chiese e insediamenti', p. 435.

²⁰ For northern Italy, see Brogiolo, *Le chiese tra VII e VIII secolo*, p. 200; Gasparri and La Rocca, *Carte di famiglia*; for the context of Tuscany, see Stoffella, 'Aristocracy and Rural Churches'; Wickham, 'Bounding the City', pp. 602–03.

²¹ Nanni, *La parrocchia studiata*, pp. 11–13.

the ideal of religious community life. These foundations were built through aristocratic initiative but often benefited from public power that allowed them to gain control of big patrimonies. A statistical study has been carried out by Wilhelm Kurze as to when these Tuscan monasteries were founded. It shows that the first monastic wave of the region was consolidated in the late eighth century and finished completely during the ninth and the first three quarters of the tenth centuries.²²

Baptismal, Monastic, and Minor Churches in the Documentation of Eighth-Century Lucca: A Quantitative-Statistical Approach

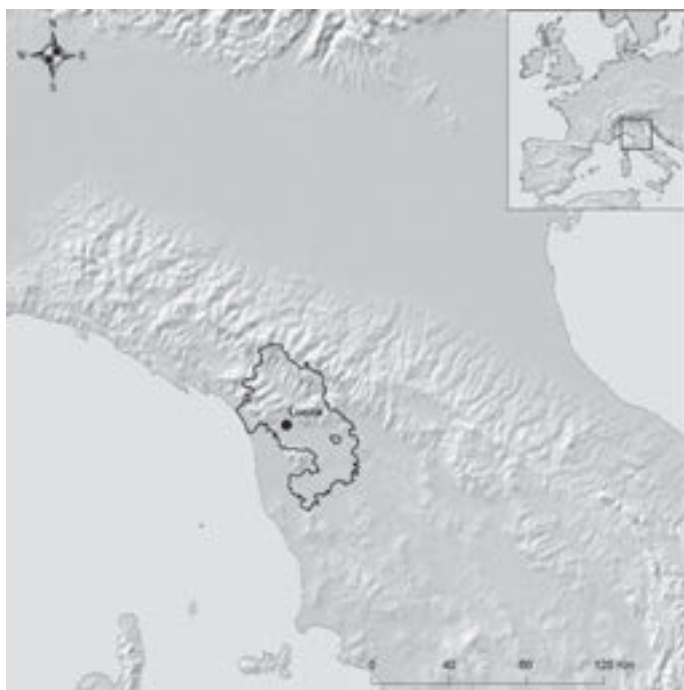
Within the described historiographical framework, the present paper aims to explore new avenues for understanding the relationship between churches and social power in early medieval Tuscany, by means of the quantitative analysis of references to churches in contemporary sources. In order to facilitate the integration of archaeological data with documentary research, all the documentary information about churches in Tuscany has been organized into a database working in a geographic and quantitative geographic information system (GIS) platform.²³ This has used the filing criteria established by the 'Corpus of Late Antique and early medieval churches of central and northern Italy', part of the CARE project (*Corpus Architecturae Religiosae Europaeae: Atlas of European Christian Architecture, Fourth–Tenth Centuries*).²⁴

This study is a work in progress, and at present the database allows analysis focusing on ecclesiastical foundations in the Lucca area (Map 5.1) during the seventh and eighth centuries, linked to Lombard aristocratic foundations at different levels. The database does not yet allow us to connect the individual ecclesiastical institutions with the social character of their patrons. For the time

²² Kurze, *Monasteri e nobiltà*, pp. 295–316, esp. pp. 302–03.

²³ The filing has been done on the edited documentation: *MDL*, IV.1, IV.2, V.2, V.3; Schiaparelli, *Codice Diplomatico Longobardo*, vols I–II; Schiaparelli and Brühl, *Codice diplomatico longobardo*, IV.1; *ChLA* 1, 2. An example of statistical-quantitative analysis of early medieval Italian religious entities can be found in Veronese, 'Monasteri femminili in Italia'.

²⁴ The project started in 2001, under the direction of Gian Pietro Brogiolo and Miljenko Jurković, and aims to catalogue all the early medieval churches, documented both in archaeological and documentary sources related to Western Europe (see Brogiolo and Chavarria Arnau, 'Chiese e insediamenti rurali', pp. 48–51). An early case study is of the monastery of S. Salvatore al Monte Amiata, although it focuses on private churches and landholdings, neglecting both urban and rural episcopal churches: Farinelli and others, 'Chiese e popolamento'.



Map 5.1.
Location map of the
diocese of Lucca. Map
by José Carlos Sánchez-
Pardo using Demis
WMS World Map.

being, however, we can guess at the general level of their status — not without a large margin of uncertainty — from the level of village elite to the so-called *Reichsadel* (royal aristocracy).²⁵ This work is limited to the distinction between baptismal churches on the one hand and ‘private’ churches and monasteries on the other. I will try to show that the elite of Lucca in the Lombard and Carolingian Age had very different attitudes and strategies about churches depending on their social-political status.

Mentions of churches in the archives of Lucca increase throughout the eighth century, peak *c.* 750–75, and remain high during the remainder of the century (Figure 5.1). This trend is to some extent due to the significant growth of the available documents in the archiepiscopal archive of Lucca in the 760s.²⁶ This growth in the number of documented churches can be interpreted as a shift in the transmission of land wealth by the aristocracy, as a substantial por-

²⁵ For early medieval Central Italy, see Stoffella, ‘Per una categorizzazione delle Élites nella Toscana’.

²⁶ On the early medieval documentation preserved in Archivio arcivescovile di Lucca, see Mailloux, ‘Constitution du patrimoine’.

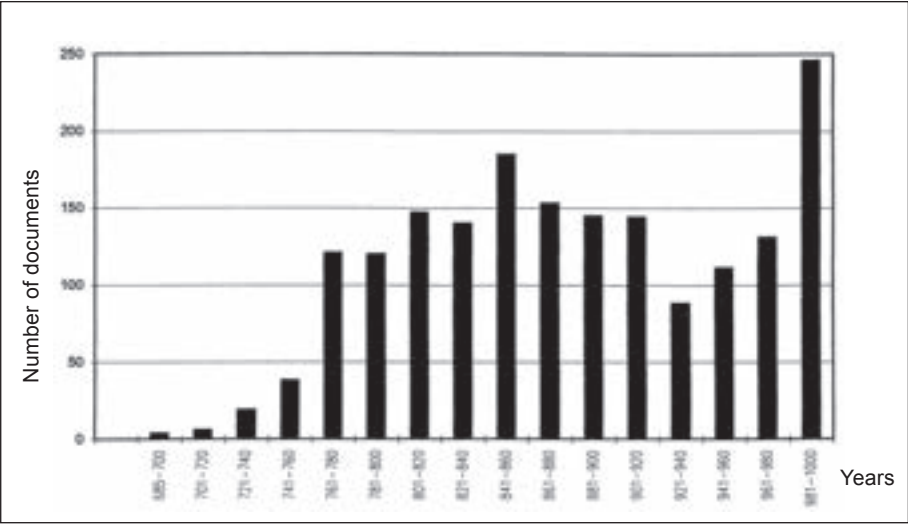


Figure 5.1. Number of documents in the Episcopal Archive of Lucca between AD 685 and 1000 (quantitative data per twenty-year period). Source: Mailloux, ‘Constitution du patrimoine’, p. 702.

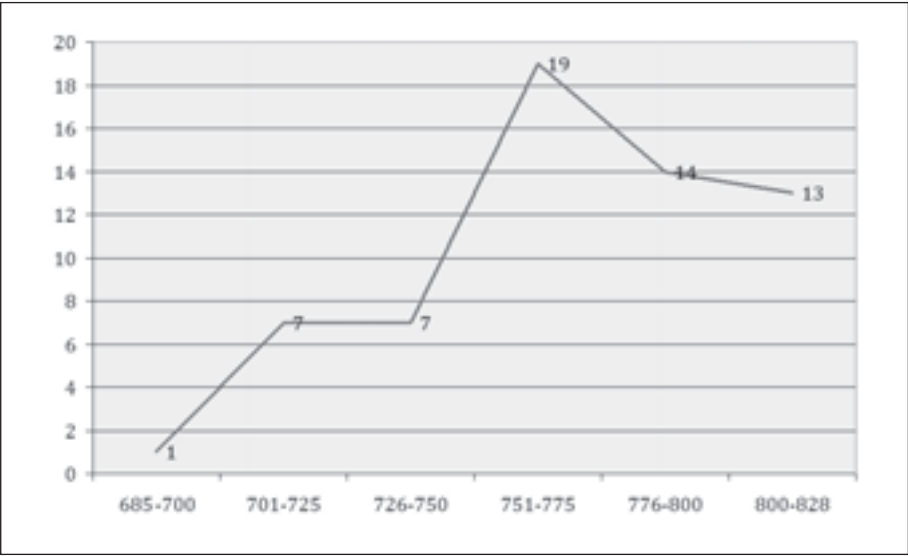


Figure 5.2. Quantitative data of dated foundations of churches per twenty-five-year period (AD 685–828). Graph by the author.

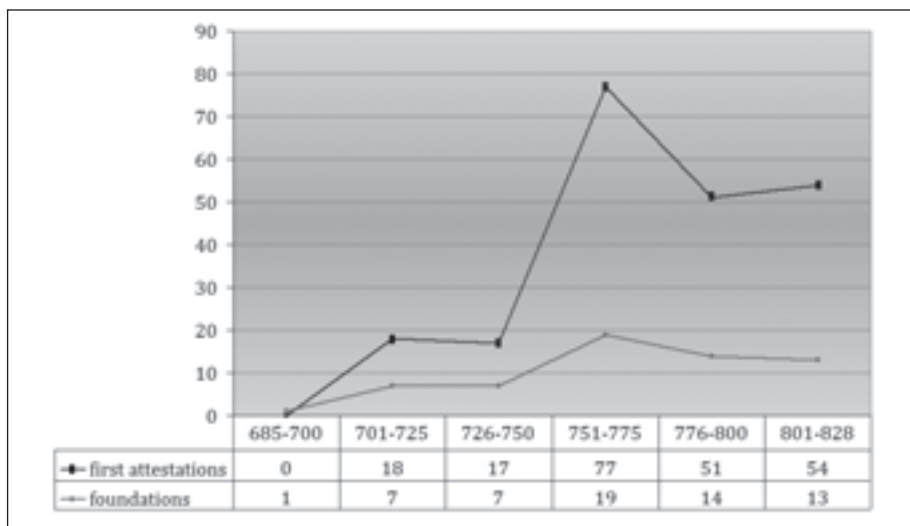


Figure 5.3. Ratio of first attestations and ecclesiastical foundations per twenty-five-year period (AD 685–828). Graph by the author.

tion of the Lombard elite strove for an increase in the foundation of religious institutions. These institutions followed a definite discipline and hierarchical organization and relied on writing and Roman law instead of the traditional ‘words or gestures’ of the rest of secular Lombard society.²⁷ Although some specific episcopal churches or monasteries attracted more donations than others, the most distinctive phenomenon in this period is the proliferation of small religious foundations.²⁸

Mentions of churches reach a peak in the 830s and fall away thereafter, partly due to regulatory prohibitions (Figure 5.2).²⁹ The early medieval texts of the archive of Lucca and some inscriptions bear witness to the recent erection of more than sixty *ecclesiae* and *monasteria* for the period between 714 and 828 (Figure 5.3).³⁰

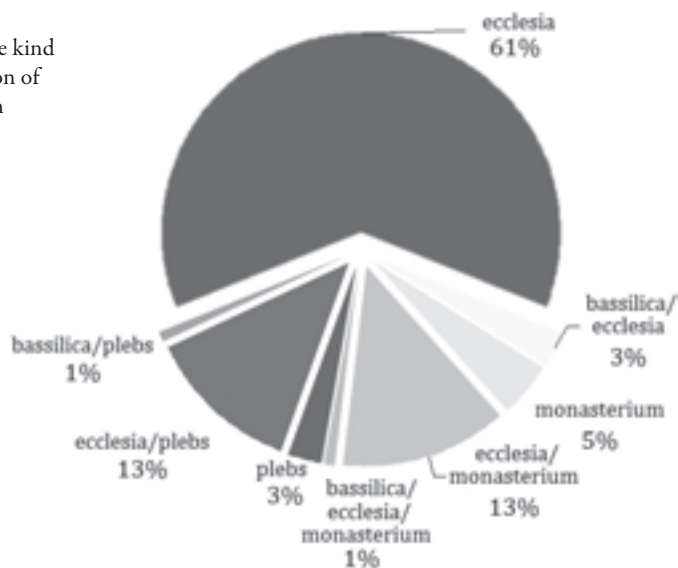
²⁷ Ghignoli, ‘Istituzioni ecclesiastiche’, pp. 622–30, especially pp. 622–23.

²⁸ On the evolution of the donations to Lucca churches in the second half of the eighth century, see Wickham, ‘Economic and Social Institutions’, p. 24; La Rocca, ‘Le “élites”’, pp. 263–71. On the growing of foundations in Lucca, see Quirós Castillo, *Modi di costruire*, pp. 103–04.

²⁹ Settia, ‘Pievi e cappelle’; La Rocca, ‘Le aristocrazie e le loro chiese’; La Rocca ‘Le “élites”’. For Lucca, see Quirós Castillo, *Modi di costruire*, pp. 106–07.

³⁰ Andrea De Conno has interpreted the Frankish influence after the conquest of the Lombard Kingdom, and in the final years of Bishop Berengarius (837–43), as being rather

Figure 5.4.
Percentages regarding the kind
of documentary definition of
ecclesiastical buildings in
the period AD 685–773.
Graph by the author.



There is a correlation between the first documentary mentions of churches and other chronological evidence for their foundation; both peak in the period 750–75. The first record of a religious institution in the documents of Lucca can therefore be assumed to be close to its actual date of foundation. Similar considerations are valid, in particular, to the mentions of baptismal churches. The baptismal function gave ‘plebes’ churches a high documentary visibility.³¹ In the Lombard Age, nearly one fifth of the first documented mentions of churches were ‘plebes’ (Figure 5.4), which is a considerably higher rate than in subsequent periods: during 775–800, for example, the percentage had already dropped to less than 10 per cent (Figure 5.5).

In most documents, ‘plebes’ are explicitly attested as such from their first mention. In a few cases the change of denomination from church to ‘plebs’ is not always explained by the acquisition of the baptismal function.³²

ephemeral (De Conno, ‘L’insediamento longobardo a Lucca’, pp. 59–66). For a quantification of church foundations, see Settia, ‘Pievi e cappelle’, p. 446 (with a reworking of data from Nanni, *La parrocchia studiata*, pp. 15–21, and Belli Barsali, ‘La topografia di Lucca’, p. 552). For analysis based mainly on epigraphic evidence, see Quiròs Castillo, *Modi di costruire*, pp. 104, 127–28, and Collavini, ‘Spazi politici’, p. 327.

³¹ Nanni, *La parrocchia studiata*, pp. 83–84.

³² Nanni, *La parrocchia studiata*, p. 65.

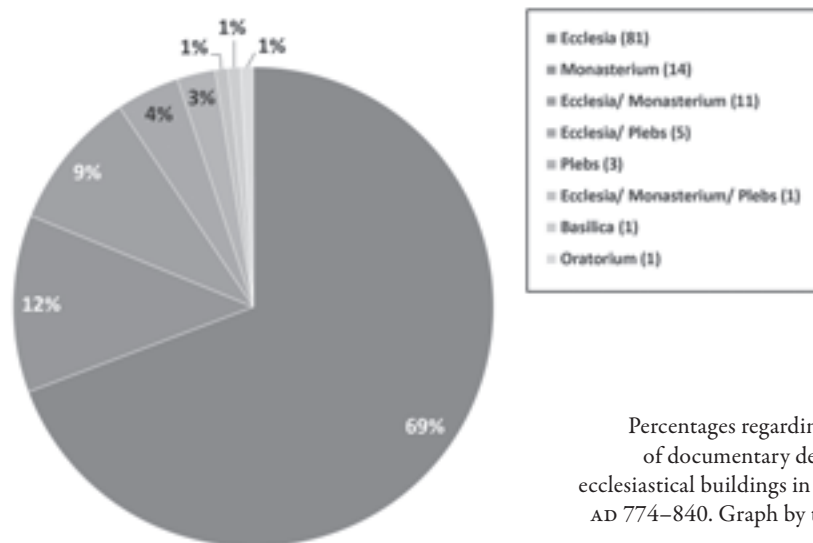


Figure 5.5.
Percentages regarding the kind
of documentary definition of
ecclesiastical buildings in the period
AD 774–840. Graph by the author.

The documents relating to the dispute between the bishops of Siena and Arezzo show that the network of baptismal churches in the countryside of south Tuscany in the first decades of the eighth century was similar to that of the central Middle Ages.³³ This can be extended to northern Tuscany, given that the early medieval documentation of Lucca contains no references to the foundation of any of the seventy baptismal churches in the Lucca area.³⁴ This implies that these baptismal churches were already in existence before the eighth century, when the rich documentation of the Lucca archives begins. Roughly seventy texts dating to between 713 and 884 provide specific information about the chronology of religious foundations and the nature of their founders, of which none relate to baptismal churches.³⁵ As in other Italian regions,³⁶ the

³³ See note 13 above.

³⁴ A possible exception is S. Macario di *Pumpiano* in Val di Serchio. This is a baptismal 'plebs', documented as such by the end of ninth century, but mentioned as a church in the year 754/55 (*ChLA* 1, 32, XIII, n. 42). I propose that it had been a baptismal church from its foundation, the date of which is independently known through epigraphic evidence as being either later sixth century (Quirós Castillo, *Modi di costruire*, p. 127), or 713–36 (Stoffella, 'Crisi e trasformazioni', pp. 16–17).

³⁵ Nanni, *La parrocchia studiata*, p. 48.

³⁶ Toubert, *Les structures du Latium*, pp. 856–57, 885; Lambert, 'La plebs di S. Maria'; Mancinelli, *Il 'registrum omnium'*, pp. 30–33.

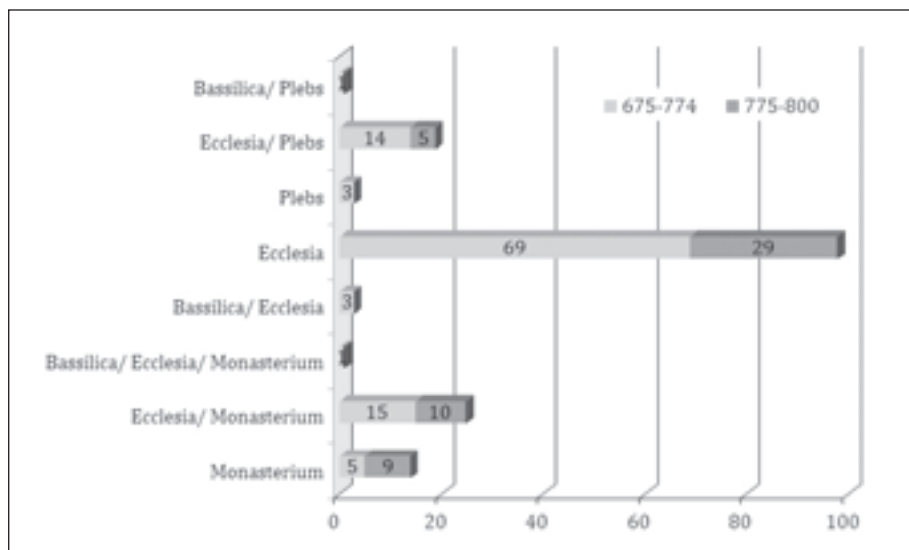


Figure 5.6. The terminology applied to ecclesiastical entities during the Lombard and earliest Carolingian periods. Graph by the author.

parish churches of Lucca have dedications which show an explicit ideological link with the early stages of rural Christianization. Mostly they were dedicated to Mary and the apostles (Peter, Philip, Thomas, and Paul) and to the most prestigious martyrs (Quiricus, Stephen, and Lawrence), which, in the tenth century, had come to be associated with the entitlement to John the Baptist.³⁷

It is reasonable to think that some of the donations made *pro anima* by the elites in the area of Lucca related to these baptismal churches. But the most striking phenomenon in the documentation is the significant amount of foundations of non-baptismal churches: more than sixty recorded for the period between 714 and 828.³⁸ It seems likely that the real quantity was considerably higher, given that the sixty known cases correspond only to those sites whose archives were later integrated into the episcopal archive of Lucca, which occurred when they came into the bishop's control. Thus, it seems possible that other churches (both disappeared and already existing) did not preserve a record of their foundation, either because they stayed under the control of the

³⁷ Nanni, *La parrocchia studiata*, pp. 48–50.

³⁸ For a list of foundations, see Nanni, *La parrocchia studiata*, pp. 15–21; for the epigraphic evidence, see note 30 above.

lay elites who founded them or because they were absorbed by other religious institutions whose archives have been lost (for example, great royal monasteries like S. Salvator of Sesto). All these non-baptismal church foundations relate to institutions called *ecclesiae*, *basilicae*, *oratoria*, *oracula*, and *monasteria*.³⁹ The latter term is used in the eighth century for religious buildings with a 'private nature', meaning a church and residence combined.⁴⁰

The terminology applied to ecclesiastical entities in Lucca grows simpler after the Carolingian conquest of the Lombard Kingdom in AD 774 (Figure 5.6). Thereafter, the proportion of references to *monasterium* and *ecclesia* increases, whilst references to *basilica* cease. In general, among the churches documented before the imperial coronation of Charlemagne in AD 800, more than 14 per cent had baptismal functions. One in four are specifically characterized with the 'private' and/or monastic connotation of *monasterium*. The foundation of institutions defined exclusively as *monasterium* shows a significant increase from the Carolingian period (774–800). At this time, the term begins to assume the sole meaning of a monastic institution.

Regarding the dedications of the Tuscan churches, private foundations show a larger and richer hagiographic repertoire than the baptismal churches.⁴¹ Under the Lombard Kingdom, dedications to St Michael and to St George,⁴² and other popular 'new' saints (such as Fredianus, Colombanus, Cerbonius, and Regolus), had been common, but are largely absent in the dedications of baptismal churches.

Generally speaking, in the Carolingian period — after 774 — we can observe an increase in the conformity of dedications: those to St Mary grew, whilst those to St Peter and St Michael persisted.⁴³ The number of churches

³⁹ Nanni, *La parrocchia studiata*, pp. 9–11.

⁴⁰ Nanni, *La parrocchia studiata*, pp. 11–13; Conti, 'Il "monasterium", sacello di fondazione privata' and, more generally, Constable, 'Monasteries, Rural Churches'.

⁴¹ By the end of the thirteenth century in Tuscany the most popular dedications were Maria, Petrus, Michael, Martinus, Andrea, Laurentius, Johannes, Bartholomeus, Stephanus, and Jacobus (Mascanzoni, *San Giacomo: il guerriero*, pp. 98–102). On the dedications of churches in the diocese of Sabina, see Mancinelli, *Il 'registrum omnium'*, pp. 30–33. For a statistical approach to the dedications of the churches, monasteries, chapels, *celle*, and *curtes* of the monastery of S. Maria of Farfa in public documentation of the ninth–eleventh centuries, see Gnocchi, 'Contributo ad un'indagine', pp. 39–49.

⁴² Nanni, *La parrocchia studiata*, p. 49.

⁴³ St Mary was by far the most common dedication at the end of the thirteenth century in Tuscany, doubling those of the most popular saints of the region, Peter, Michael, and Martin

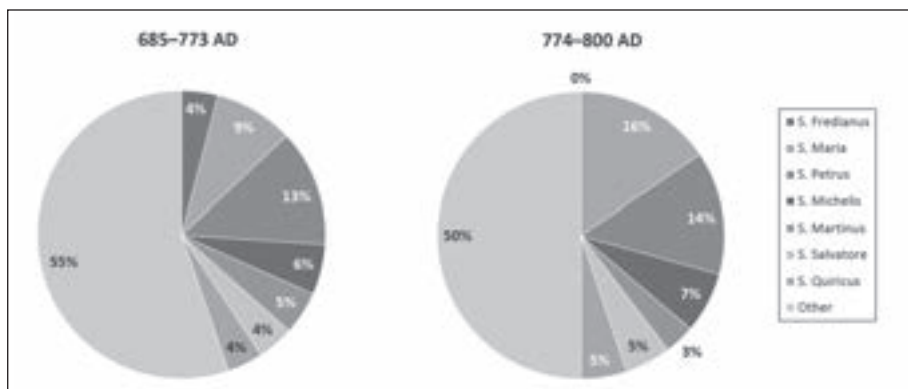


Figure 5.7. Proportions of ecclesiastical dedications (AD 685–800). Graph by the author.

dedicated to St Fredianus decreases (Figure 5.7).⁴⁴ This phenomenon can be linked with the drive towards the uniformity of private foundations promoted by the new Carolingian rulers.⁴⁵ There is not space here to analyse these dedications, but future research in this area in the early medieval archive of Lucca would be fruitful.⁴⁶

Most of the churches documented between 685 and 774 in the Lucca archive were located within the diocese of Lucca itself, the majority in the city. Mentions of churches outside the diocese in the archive nevertheless constitute a significant proportion (21%) of the total. However, with the fall of the Lombard Kingdom in 774 and the beginning of the Carolingian period, changes are found in the episcopal archive of Lucca regarding the geographi-

(Mascanzoni, *San Giacomo: il guerriero*, pp. 100–101). A significant growth of dedications to St Mary is detected by the end of the ninth century in Farfa's documents, although of course it existed earlier: Gnocchi, 'Contributo ad un'indagine', pp. 44–45. Regarding the spread of the Virgin's dedication in early medieval episcopal churches, see also Mancinelli, *Il 'registrum omnium'*, p. 33, n. 25.

⁴⁴ On the cult to St Fredianus in Lucca's country, see Zaccagnini, *Vita sancti Frediani*; Stoffella, 'Aristocracy and Rural Churches', pp. 301–05.

⁴⁵ La Rocca, 'Le "élites"'.

⁴⁶ The possibility of examining trends in early medieval church dedications from Lucca archives can be helpful in order to establish the chronology and typology of church foundation in other areas with less data. In fact, in most of the Italian cases, the information on church dedications is only available in later sources. However, the information from later sources allows a geographical-quantitative approach on their distribution, and this kind of study can benefit from the statistical results of our analysis on Lucca documents.

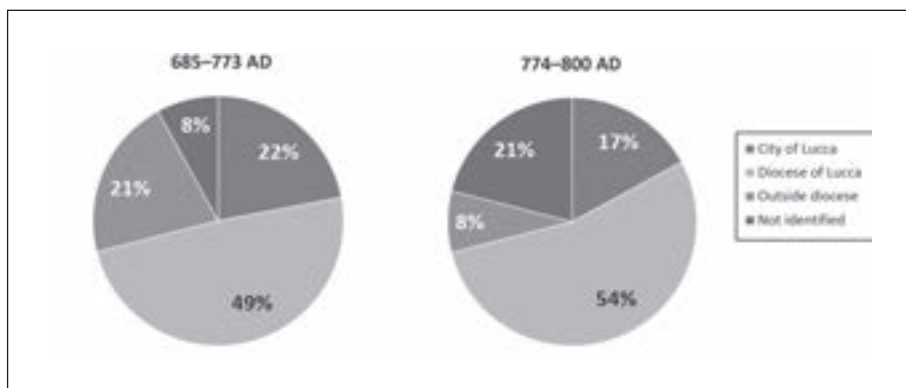


Figure 5.8. Location of the examined churches. Percentage data (AD 685–800). Graph by the author.

cal distribution of documented churches. At the beginning of the Carolingian period, the tendency to equate the civil and ecclesiastical territories led to a reduction in the influence of the Church outside the Diocese of Lucca, and only 8 per cent of new documented churches between 775 and 800 lie outside the diocese (Figure 5.8).

The Role of Churches in Early Medieval Tuscan Elite Practice

In eighth-century Tuscany, there was a strong relationship between churches and the various social elites, both ecclesiastical and secular. The strategies of these elites regarding churches varied over time; for clarity, I discuss them as two alternate strategies, but in reality they could coexist in the actions of a single family, or even a single individual.⁴⁷

The first strategy is represented by the close relations between social elites and the episcopacy, according to an urban-centric scheme, but also operating in the countryside through the establishment of links with the episcopal baptismal churches. This is implied in the consolidation of the late Roman ecclesiastical system, which moulded the new Lombard and Carolingian elite and their resources into a disciplined and hierarchical structure. This consolidated the prestige and power of the bishops, who were able to mediate between the urban and rural aristocracy. This elite strategy required the production and preservation of documents and is therefore better preserved in the Lucca archive.

⁴⁷ Both alternative strategies are explored in Cammarosano, *Nobili e re*, p. 70.

The alternative strategy was more in line with the Lombard tradition, since it was focused on the family group and personal relationships and was not necessarily mediated by the production of documents. It was based on monasteries and private family churches, both in cities and in the countryside, which were endowed with land by their founders. In some cases the archive of the bishop preserves a *carta dotis* (document of the original donation). In other cases we can only get an approximate indication of foundation date by means of the references contained in later documents. This is often the moment when these churches enter into contact with the Church of Lucca. Finally, most of these churches are mentioned in the documents of the bishop without mention of the date or persons linked to their creation. This shows us that they probably were not a foundation of the bishops of Lucca.

In the context of settlement history, the church foundations that characterize the seventh and especially the eighth centuries have been linked to two main processes, according to different historiographical positions. On the one hand, it has been related to the 'pioneer colonization' that prepared, in dispersed settlements, the succeeding 'incastellamento' of the tenth and eleventh centuries (for southern Lazio and Sabina). On the other hand, it has been linked to the affirmation of aristocratic powers in the local society (for southern Tuscany).

These places of worship, systematically deprived of baptismal font, created an ecclesiastical system to some extent alternative and competitive to the network of episcopal (essentially 'public') parishes, especially with regard to funerary practice and gifts *pro anima*. In the long term — despite the regulatory efforts of Carolingian lay and ecclesiastical leaders — some monasteries and many churches became private burial and family memorial places for more and more elites, in opposition to the baptismal churches. These baptismal 'plebes' churches were almost left as cemeteries for 'poor people' (*pauperes*), resulting in a need to obtain resources for pastoral care through a system of tithes, *oblaciones*, and *mortuaria*.⁴⁸

In the light of excavations in Tuscany, there were no objectives or conclusive findings to confirm the theory expressed some time ago, by Cinzio Violante and Aldo A. Settia, that the habit of burying dead in the Carolingian *plebes* only grew in the tenth century, after the collection of tithes became a canonical obligation.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Settia, 'Pievi e cappelle', p. 450. For the case of Lucca, see Nanni, *La parrocchia studiata*, pp. 53–59, 187–89.

⁴⁹ On the introduction of the compulsory tithe in the Lombard Kingdom by the initiative

From the social perspective of the territorial structure, 'plebes' were the axis of the late antique system of dispersed settlement, linked to the activity of sub-regional aristocracies. In contrast, territorial organization centred in villages, monasteries, and small 'private' churches could indicate the presence of rural elites, only able to conduct their social hegemony in a local context. Some studies have been recently made on this topic for the Carolingian and post-Carolingian periods, but — in my opinion — it still remains for us to investigate the eighth century.

However, at present these regional archaeological studies do not adequately explain the history and forms of this phenomenon. In my opinion there is not sufficient archaeological evidence to verify at a local level an evolution linked to the so-called Carolingian and post-Carolingian 'inecclesiamento', the concentration of a settlement around a church, proposed for other parts of Europe.⁵⁰ This theory, similar to the 'incastellamento' of Pierre Toubert and to the 'encellement' of Robert Fossier, both of which relate to the feudal concentration of settlement during the eighth–twelfth centuries, does not fully explain the development of the territorial structures of early medieval Tuscany. These data have yet to be analysed using a GIS system, which will allow us to better distinguish different developments in each area and to understand possible links between ecclesiastical organization, settlement structures, and the geography of power.

of Charlemagne, see Castagnetti, 'Le decime e i laici', pp. 509–16, and the bibliography in note 11 above. On the links with funerary practices, see Violante, 'Le istituzioni ecclesiastiche', pp. 643–799; Settia, *Chiese, strade e fortezze*, pp. 445–89; Azzara, 'Ecclesiastical Institutions', pp. 90–91; Mancinelli, 'Il "registrum omnium"', pp. 34–35; Ronzani, 'L'organizzazione territoriale', p. 206.

⁵⁰ Lauwers, *Naissance du cimetière*; Iogna-Prat and Zadora-Rio, 'Formation et transformations', pp. 5–10; La Rocca, 'Le "élites"', pp. 263–71. Cf. also Fixot and Zadora-Rio, *L'église, le terroir*; Parodi, 'Les églises dans le paysage', pp. 107–21; Zadora-Rio, 'The Making of Churchyards'; Morsel, *L'aristocratie médiévale*, p. 189.

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Part II

Churches and the Transition of Power

PATRONAGE IN TRANSITION: LORDSHIP, CHURCHES, AND FUNERARY MONUMENTS IN ANGLO-NORMAN ENGLAND

Aleksandra McClain

Introduction

Local churches were a key feature of rural medieval England, occupying a central place in settlements from their origins in the Anglo-Saxon period and throughout the later Middle Ages. Because of their close ties to rural settlement patterns and England's manorial system,¹ through which landholding and lordship were defined, they also embodied a unique confluence of religious and secular power. As such, these churches are an ideal milieu through which to explore the material dimensions of lordship and patronage.

The relationship between the early medieval 'local' church and the later medieval 'parish' church in England is both direct and complicated, and it was undergoing a key transformation in the period focused on here.² In the late Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman periods, the English parochial structure coalesced around a network of pre-existing churches, which were already associated with foci of settlement and which had widely differing origins and dates of foundation.³ The oldest churches began as ecclesiastical institutions known as Anglo-Saxon 'minsters', a generic term for a range of seventh- to ninth-cen-

¹ Bassett, 'Boundaries of Knowledge'; Daniels, 'The Church, the Manor, and the Settlement'.

² Blair, 'Introduction: From Minster to Parish Church'.

³ For a parallel case study of the same period on the Continent, see David Petts's contribution to this volume on churches in western Normandy.

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ture churches which were characterized by communities of priests or monks, episcopal or royal patronage, and large protoparochial territories (often known as *parochiae*) which might include smaller dependent churches.⁴ Many more churches were added to this early network in the tenth and eleventh centuries, founded in some instances by free men as communal churches, and in others by landholding lords as patronal chapels, which sat near their manor houses and served the private spiritual needs of themselves and their families.⁵ Regardless of their origins, however, most of these minster and local churches eventually became the parish churches of England, integrated into a hierarchical system of pastoral care which was driven by the institutional Church and codified by the end of the twelfth century.⁶

Local churches are key to understanding the material manifestations of lordship not only because of their ubiquity in the English landscape, but also because of their centrality to the rhythms and relationships of daily life and the community. In addition to serving as the spiritual focus of the settlement, the church's land, as well as the numerous duties, tithes, and obligations it commanded, made it a lucrative mechanism in the manorial system and a potent symbol of wealth and authority.⁷ The importance of the local church in the Middle Ages stemmed not only from its institutional power in both the religious and secular spheres, but also from the church building itself. In many cases, the church was the oldest, most prominent, most expensive, and most permanent building in a settlement.⁸ The church's physical presence carried with it considerable social significance, and patrons paid handsomely to be a part of its material legacy. The architecture, fittings, and churchyard became a canvas for elite patronage and expenditure. By spending money on its fabric, by erecting commemorative monuments, and by establishing control over spaces within and outside the church, patrons had a means of communicating their intentions to an audience both in the immediate community and further afield.

However, these churches also held meanings beyond their physical attributes. They were highly resonant social spaces, a forum in which human interactions — between both the living and the dead — were carried out.⁹

⁴ Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, pp. 3, 73, 89.

⁵ Everson and Stocker, 'The Common Steeple?', p. 115.

⁶ Addleshaw, *Rectors, Vicars, and Patrons*; Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, p. 369.

⁷ Pounds, *A History of the English Parish*, p. 202.

⁸ Graves, 'Social Space in the English Medieval Parish Church', p. 311.

⁹ Graves, 'Social Space in the English Medieval Parish Church', p. 301.

Parish churches were unique amongst medieval elite buildings in one particularly significant way: although socially and physically defined by elite patronage, they were communal buildings which were at least partially accessible to everyone in the settlement, regardless of their place on the social ladder. As such, these churches were potentially profoundly meaningful to all classes of people in medieval English society, and they were locales in which patrons had the opportunity to communicate with a range of audiences and social strata.¹⁰ Few arenas in the medieval world offered access to such a diverse audience, and patrons could utilize the church as a potent tool of social negotiation with those below them, above them, and equal to them in the social hierarchy. When it was essential to a patron to define his place in the world, or his status, identity, or legacy, the parish church was of unparalleled value.

This article concentrates on exploring the relationship between lordly patrons and churches in the eleventh and twelfth centuries in northern England, considering the effects of both the Viking settlement of the region and the Norman Conquest of 1066 and its aftermath. Despite the regional basis of the data, an exploration of the relationship between churches and lordship in northern England has implications for our understanding of the ties between early medieval churches and lordship on national and international scales, given that much of Europe was undergoing similar changes in lordship, settlement, and parochial organization from the tenth to twelfth centuries.¹¹ In England, these turbulent and influential centuries were marked by substantial transformations in lordship and land organization, major political upheavals, cultural contact and integration between Anglo-Saxon, Scandinavian, and Norman settlers, and the eventual consolidation of a hybrid Anglo-Norman social and material culture. These socio-political trends affected the foundation and development of local churches and the physical form which they took. In this environment of intense political and cultural change, the use of ecclesiastical patronage by lords as a means of displaying wealth, demonstrating authority, and consolidating elite identities became particularly crucial.

¹⁰ Graves, 'Social Space in the English Medieval Parish Church', p. 311.

¹¹ Chapelot and Fossier, *The Village and the House in the Middle Ages*, p. 134; Crouch, *The Birth of Nobility*.

The Significance of the Norman Conquest

The conquest of England by the Normans is generally conceptualized as a watershed moment in the history of England, as it not only fundamentally changed the country's ruling class, prevailing culture, and governmental structure, but also left a lasting physical mark on the secular and ecclesiastical landscape. However, we must be cautious in assuming that the Norman enthusiasm for building, administration, and land distribution was able to easily overwrite England's Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Scandinavian past.¹² While it is true that William the Conqueror was not technically constrained in his choice of to whom the land of England was distributed, the vills and manors that he conferred on his followers were well-established components of an organized and utilized landscape, and many persisted with little essential transformation through the Conquest period.¹³

While the impact of the Conquest on the fabric and character of local churches will be a key focus of this article, we must be similarly cautious about attributing changes in the local church in the late eleventh and twelfth centuries primarily to the Norman victory and incoming continental influences. The large, newly built castles, cathedrals, and monasteries that rapidly began to populate the landscape after the Conquest have made it easy to assume that parish churches would also have been swept up in the tide of post-Conquest change, becoming simply another facet of Norman cultural dominance and physical imposition. But parish churches, the parochial system, and the lordly and manorial milieu which housed them not only existed long before the Conquest, but were also fundamentally changing well before the Normans arrived.¹⁴ Between the ninth and eleventh centuries, the large territories that characterized Anglo-Saxon great estates and minster churches were being dissolved into the smaller villages, manors, and churches that eventually formed the later medieval tenurial and parochial structure.¹⁵ At the same time, new local churches were being founded, sometimes built in stone,¹⁶ and patrons

¹² For example, Hollister, 'Henry I and the Anglo-Norman Magnates', p. 94; Holt, *Colonial England*, p. xvii.

¹³ Fleming, *Kings and Lords in Conquest England*, p. 133; Garnett, *Conquered England*, pp. 97–98; Miller and Hatcher, *Rural England*, p. 18.

¹⁴ Carver, 'Conversion and Politics', pp. 24–26.

¹⁵ Baxter, 'Lordship and Labour', p. 100; Blair, 'Introduction: From Minster to Parish Church', p. 2; Blair, 'Churches in the Early English Landscape', p. 12.

¹⁶ Gem, 'The English Parish Church in the 11th and Early 12th Centuries', p. 23; Morris,

began to populate the churchyards with new styles and far greater numbers of stone commemorative monuments.¹⁷ By the time of the Norman Conquest, the essential elements of the later medieval parish, church, and churchyard had already firmly taken hold.

The argument for the Conquest as an era-defining change has been made particularly for northern England, where the process was marked by a number of rebellions against the new Norman rulers and by King William's retaliatory campaign through the region, documented as the 'Harrying of the North'. These events have often led to the Norman Conquest of the north as being characterized primarily by antagonism between Normans and natives,¹⁸ and the changes that the Normans wrought in landscape and settlement have sometimes been seen as more comprehensive than in southern parts of England.¹⁹ However, both Scandinavian settlement and rule and the enduring civil and ecclesiastical framework of the pre-Viking period bore substantial influence on the manors and churches of northern England even after the Norman Conquest.²⁰

The iconic status of 'the Norman Conquest' in the popular and academic mindset can tend to oversimplify the realities of social and political transition.²¹ Patronage and expenditure around the time of the Conquest have at times been characterized as the triumphant gesture of victorious conquerors,²² or the one-dimensional stamping of authority on a subjugated people.²³ However, the religious and social frameworks that eventually emerged in the later Middle Ages were not simply or mainly the product of one event or people, but rather a complex result generated by the combination of all of these forces over time. Unpicking this long and multifaceted period of transition is particularly important when considering the north of England, where the traditional narrative has given primacy to the difficult post-Conquest relation-

'Churches in York and its Hinterland', p. 191.

¹⁷ Stocker, 'Monuments and Merchants', p. 193.

¹⁸ For example, Bishop, 'The Norman Settlement of Yorkshire'; Kapelle, *The Norman Conquest of the North*; Lennard, *Rural England, 1086–1135*; Palliser, 'Domesday Book and the Harrying of the North'; Roffe, 'From Thegnage to Barony'; Wightman, 'The Significance of "Waste" in the Yorkshire Domesday'.

¹⁹ For example, Allerston, 'English Village Development'.

²⁰ Hadley, *The Northern Danelaw*, p. 279; Richards, *Viking Age England*, p. 42.

²¹ Chibnall, *The Debate on the Norman Conquest*, p. 59.

²² Fernie, 'The Effect of the Conquest on Norman Architectural Patronage', p. 84.

²³ Le Patourel, *The Norman Empire*, p. 353.

ship between Normans and northerners. When patterns of patronage in local churches in the eleventh and twelfth centuries are examined closely, they demonstrate that there is considerably more nuance to the Norman Conquest, and to the role that churches and their patrons played in it, than conventional wisdom has allowed.

Lordship, Patronage, and Local Churches

Examining the relationships between lordly power and the local church in this period has been a fruitful avenue for both historians and archaeologists, but it is also one that has not yet been explored to its full potential. For historians, the discussion has centred primarily on lordly possession of parish churches, especially their lands and tithes, and rights of investiture. They have also considered the process of alienating ownership of parish churches to monasteries, which began in the eleventh century and accelerated throughout the twelfth.²⁴ Another common theme has been the foundation of churches and the formation of the parish, especially as it relates to the information found in the 1086 Domesday survey, which was carried out by the Normans to assess the extent of landed wealth and tax liability in England.²⁵

Archaeological approaches to examining the role of lordship in the church have often focused on the spatial dimension within the settlement. The close relationships between the sites of castles, manor houses, and churches explicitly demonstrate the links that often existed between secular expressions of power and the physical location of the church.²⁶ Archaeologists and architectural historians alike have also explored the architectural fabric of the church in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and the effects that the patronage of the elite secular and religious classes had on the physical form of the church.²⁷

²⁴ For example, Addleshaw, *Rectors, Vicars, and Patrons*; Kemp, 'Monastic Possession of Parish Churches'; Rasche, 'The Early Phase of Appropriation of Parish Churches in Medieval England'.

²⁵ For example, Blair, 'Local Churches in Domesday Book'; Holdsworth, 'The Church at Domesday'.

²⁶ For example, Daniels, 'The Church, the Manor, and the Settlement'; Everson and Stocker, 'The Common Steeple?'; McDonagh, '"Powerhouses" of the Wolds Landscape'; Morris, *Churches in the Landscape*; Saunders, 'The Feudal Construction of Space'.

²⁷ For example, Cambridge, 'Early Romanesque Architecture in Northeast England'; Fernie, 'Architecture and the Effects of the Norman Conquest'; Graves, *The Form and Fabric of Belief*; Shapland, 'In Unenvied Greatness Stands'; Stocker and Everson, *Summoning St Michael*.



Map 6.1.
The North Riding
of Yorkshire, within
the historic county of
Yorkshire, England.
Map by the author and
José Carlos Sánchez-
Pardo using Demis
WMS World Map.

The case study explored later in this article builds on previous historical and archaeological work, combining Domesday and other documentary references with a range of material evidence to gain a more complete picture of the provision and character of local churches in the North Riding of Yorkshire before and after the Norman Conquest and to determine how they were affected by lordly patronage and social transitions (Map 6.1). Methodologically, the case study employs an integrated landscape and material approach, using mapping and spatial analysis at local and regional scales to track patterns of investment in parish churches over extended areas of space and time. Most importantly, this approach takes into account not only architectural fabric, but also funerary monuments, which were an integral part of the spatial and physical experience in the church. The primary forms of monuments which are considered are the standing crosses and recumbent ‘hogback’ grave covers of the Anglo-Scandinavian period and the ‘cross slab’ grave monuments that were in use from the eleventh century onward. Despite being a highly valued and

long-established mode of expenditure and display, and one of the most commonly surviving forms of ecclesiastical material culture from the Middle Ages, grave monuments are only rarely analysed systematically and contextually by archaeologists,²⁸ especially in the post-Conquest period. Without them, our picture of the material world of the local church is incomplete.

Characterizing Pre- and Post-Conquest Lordship

To effectively analyse the interaction between lords and churches in this period, we must first define who these lords were and the relationships that they cultivated with each other and other members of the social hierarchy. We also must understand how elite society developed between the tenth and twelfth centuries. Although the terms 'lord' and 'lordship' are often used in a generic fashion, it is important to remember that the medieval English aristocracy was far from a homogeneous group. As such, the motivations of various lords and their interests in the local church could diverge widely depending on their social needs. The secular elite encompassed an enormous range of people: from earls and baronial magnates who held land across the country in hundreds of manors, to multiple gradations of regional, local, and manorial lords and knights who held territory in far fewer locations.²⁹ The lower strata of the elite are particularly hard to trace because they are so rarely named or characterized in documentary sources, but they were also the group of lords most central to the material development of the local church. Although magnates were financially and socially dominant, the local lay elite often wielded *de facto* power in the local church, as the representatives of manorial authority 'on the ground'.³⁰ The physical record of architecture and commemoration thus provides us with a means to access their actions and motivations.

Although medieval lordship and the concept of 'feudalism' have often gone hand in hand, the multiplicity of social relationships that existed between the various strata of society was more complex than any traditional feudal model allows.³¹ The basic structures of authority and power have recently been empha-

²⁸ For example, Finch, 'Commemorating Change'; Stocker, 'Monuments and Merchants'; Stocker and Everson, 'Five Towns' Funerals'.

²⁹ Crouch, *The Birth of Nobility*, p. 237; Lennard, *Rural England, 1086–1135*, p. 28.

³⁰ Dyer, 'Power and Conflict', p. 28; Everson and Stocker, 'The Common Steeple?', pp. 119–20.

³¹ Crouch, *The Birth of Nobility*, p. 279.

sized as a more useful line of enquiry than strict feudal models.³² These fundamental social mechanisms and identities are more appropriate to an archaeological approach than a narrow, document-derived concept of feudalism. They also allow us to observe both continuity and change in the character of lordly relationships before and after the Norman Conquest, without entering debates about when 'feudalism' began or who introduced it.³³ It seems likely that the endurance of pre-Conquest concepts of land distribution, military obligation, and lordship ensured that any 'feudal' system under Norman rule was only a thin veneer on existing tenurial organization.³⁴ While land changed hands and the tenurial hierarchy became more complex, the daily administration of agrarian life was probably relatively undisrupted by the Norman Conquest.³⁵ The institution of manorial lordship was just as integral to the Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Scandinavian rulers of the ninth and tenth centuries as to the Anglo-Normans of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and the tenurial organization that emerged in medieval England was undoubtedly a product of integration rather than pure imposition.³⁶

There is also considerable continuity in the social identities of medieval lords, as they were expressed both towards each other and to members of the lower social orders and the higher elite. Tom Saunders has argued that the physical manifestations of elite identities were directed as much towards other lords as to subordinate peasants, borne out of and perpetuating their constant conflicts for wealth, authority, and position in the social hierarchy.³⁷ The manorial system of Norman England was a perfect crucible for this inter-lordly competition. The large landholdings of the early Norman period were subdivided and let to many different men of roughly the same minor elite rank, resulting in a large number of subtenants holding land in a compact area from the same magnate.³⁸ They would have been jostling for favour, status, and territory and competing against each other to demonstrate their social relevance and ambi-

³² Bisson, 'Medieval Lordship'; Chibnall, 'Lordship and Feudalism'; Frame, 'Conquest and Settlement', p. 45.

³³ Crouch, *The Birth of Nobility*, p. 278.

³⁴ Roffe, 'From Thegnage to Barony', p. 172.

³⁵ Aston, 'The Origins of the Manor in England', p. 3.

³⁶ Baxter, 'Lordship and Labour', p. 100; Bean, *From Lord to Patron*, p. 2; Chibnall, *The Debate on the Norman Conquest*, p. 86; Loyn, *Anglo-Saxon England and the Norman Conquest*, p. 327; Richards, *Viking Age England*, p. 41.

³⁷ Saunders, 'Class, Space and "Feudal" Identities', p. 224.

³⁸ Lennard, *Rural England, 1086-1135*, p. 57.

tion to their overlords. The distribution of land by Viking leaders to their followers almost certainly engendered a similar situation, although the tenurial hierarchy would not have been as complex.³⁹ The Anglo-Scandinavian landscape of manors and churches would have created equally ideal circumstances for fostering inter-elite rivalry and competitive display, and by the time of the Norman Conquest, this interplay between church patronage, competitive status-building, and lordly identity was well established.

The Material Trappings of Lordship

Both horizontally and vertically directed acts of lordly social display were manifested in physical trappings, which were a means by which wealth and power could be translated into material status.⁴⁰ Banners, devices, social titles, luxury clothes and food, seals, and prestige residences marked the great lords of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and further down the social scale, lesser lords aspired to these symbols. They used their expendable material wealth to co-opt the trappings of the upper echelons as best they could, and they developed their own particular types of material expression as well.⁴¹ It is argued here that local churches and graveyards were one of the primary locales in which lesser elites developed their own specific modes of social display.

This use of high-profile expenditure in churches to establish social location was in evidence well before the Conquest.⁴² It can be seen clearly, for example, in the Anglo-Scandinavian emphasis on the establishment of private churches and personal commemoration, which were substantial investments in the tangible symbols of lordship and power.⁴³ The numerous crosses and gravestones found in the Danelaw, as well as the stone sundials that proclaimed patrons' expenditure and piety, prove that they knew the value of ecclesiastical material culture in establishing and legitimating authority.⁴⁴ Viking Age gravestones often featured a mixture of Christian imagery, Scandinavian decorative styles

³⁹ Lang, *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture*, III, 27; Owen, 'Chapelries and Rural Settlement', p. 67.

⁴⁰ Crouch, *The Image of the Aristocracy in Britain*, p. 15; Steane, *The Archaeology of Power*, p. 252.

⁴¹ Crouch, *The Image of the Aristocracy in Britain*, p. 134.

⁴² Williams, *The World Before Domesday*, pp. 118–19, 123.

⁴³ Stocker, 'Monuments and Merchants', p. 197.

⁴⁴ Hadley, 'Hamlet and the Princes of Denmark', p. 110.

and mythological scenes, and depictions of secular lordship and elite leisure,⁴⁵ all of which illustrate the monuments' ability to underscore both group and individual identities.

The Normans, too, were skilled in their use of churches as a means of expressing authority, both as individuals and as a unified cultural group. The great churches that they built were hallmarks of Norman rule, both in France and across Europe,⁴⁶ and the intensity of monastic patronage of the Norman aristocracy in twelfth-century England and France was unmatched in previous or subsequent centuries.⁴⁷ Their major building projects were undoubtedly an exercise in conspicuous consumption, and it is easy to see why these construction programmes have been interpreted as a deliberate attempt to impress a singularly Norman culture and authority.⁴⁸ As there was comparatively little variation in the basic archaeological record of England before and after the Conquest (e.g. tools, pottery, domestic structures),⁴⁹ Norman Romanesque architectural fabric provides one of the few examples of culturally 'Norman' evidence. However, it has recently been called into question whether it is valid to conceive of 'the Romanesque' as a coherent style and meaning-bearing entity.⁵⁰ Whether Romanesque architecture indicates an expression of unified Norman ethnic identity is even less certain, particularly at the level of the local church. Elite patrons in England were building churches in stone before the Norman Conquest,⁵¹ demonstrating through their patronage not only piety, but the authority, wealth, and resources that they commanded. From the earliest Anglo-Saxon royal minsters to the private chapels and protoparochial churches of the tenth and eleventh centuries, secular affiliation with churches had long been a component of lordly identity. The Norman lords enthusiastically adopted the practice of stone church-building after their arrival in England, but was it seen as an expression of specifically Norman lordship, or simply a necessary facet of maintaining status and elite identity — a concern that was quite separate from culture and ethnicity?

⁴⁵ For example, Lang, *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture*, III; Lang, *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture*, VI.

⁴⁶ Chibnall, *The Normans*, pp. 24–27.

⁴⁷ Crouch, *The English Aristocracy, 1070–1272*, p. 231.

⁴⁸ Holt, *Colonial England*, p. 7.

⁴⁹ Rowley, *Norman England*, p. 12.

⁵⁰ O'Keefe, *Archaeology and the Pan-European Romanesque*.

⁵¹ Rahtz and Watts, 'Three Ages of Conversion at Kirkdale, North Yorkshire', p. 289.

Both before and after the Conquest, status played a significant role in the use of material culture in constructing and maintaining social identity.⁵² Since both the pre- and post-Conquest lordly elite had the resources to command expensive and highly visible forms of material culture, they had access to a tangible means by which status and authority could be constantly physically manifested and reinforced.⁵³ The process of creating socially significant material culture should be seen in terms of continual and reflexive practice, and not just as an end result.⁵⁴ Patrons were aware of their authority, and the material culture they generated contributed to that awareness. Each commissioned object was a conscious act of creation which had specifically intended audiences and outcomes, not least reinforcing the patron's social position and identity. The patron's social self was not static or a permanent state, but a continuous process of creation and recreation, which was expressed through the material culture that they employed to communicate that identity.⁵⁵ Thus, local churches and grave monuments were not just physically and conceptually shaped by the needs of lords' social identities, but also played active roles in how they coped with political and social upheaval, and tried to shape it to their advantage. Churches served as arenas in which such transitions could be negotiated, and monuments and architecture were media through which lords were able to create and control social, political, and cultural perceptions and relationships.

Patrons and Processes in the Churches of Anglo-Norman North Yorkshire

Change and Continuity in the Local Church

During the centuries under discussion, the local church was undergoing fundamental changes in both a physical and institutional sense. A great number of scholars have debated in detail the process by which a fairly sparse network of eighth- and ninth-century minster churches focused around major estates transformed into the parochial system that would eventually characterize the

⁵² Crouch, *The English Aristocracy, 1070–1272*, p. 193; Fleming, 'The New Wealth'; Williams, *The World Before Domesday*, pp. 85ff.

⁵³ Graves, 'Social Space in the English Medieval Parish Church', p. 311; Fleming, 'The New Wealth', pp. 3–4.

⁵⁴ Conkey and Hastorf, 'Experimenting with Style in Archaeology', p. 12.

⁵⁵ Moreland, 'Method and Theory', p. 20.

later Middle Ages.⁵⁶ It is unnecessary to explore this process in detail here, and it has been examined in northern England by other scholars.⁵⁷ Although the character of the process varied considerably from region to region, all of these studies have demonstrated that there was both continuity and fundamental change in the transition between the minster and parochial systems.⁵⁸ Even as the parochial system was transformed to accommodate new churches and settlements, legacies of the minster network and the previous estates persisted throughout the medieval period, in both territorial boundaries as well as in hierarchical church and chapel relationships. What will be emphasized here, however, is that instances of continuity and change did not just *happen* — they arose from the deliberate choices and actions of patrons, who made informed decisions about the past and future of local churches in light of their own social, cultural, and political needs.

One North Riding example of the persistence of these long-established relationships can be seen in the churches and manors which formed the 'soke of Pickering', the lands which are recorded in Domesday Book as belonging to the jurisdiction of the manor of Pickering. In 1086, the manor of Pickering encompassed the manors of Middleton, Ellerburn, Wilton, Levisham, Thornton-le-Dale, Lockton, Allerston, Ebberston, and Brompton within its extensive subsidiary landholdings, or 'sokelands'. The manors which belonged to Pickering in 1086 are almost certainly a legacy of the extent of its large pre-Conquest estate, and these relationships of tenure and lordship were mirrored in the ecclesiastical structure of both the pre- and post-Conquest periods (Figure 6.1). It has been suggested that in the Anglo-Saxon period the church at Pickering was the chief royal minster in the area, overseeing a *parochia* that was co-extensive with the great manor.⁵⁹ Several of Pickering's sokelands have evidence for pre-Conquest churches, which gives credence to this claim. An eighth-century sculptured cross at Middleton is evidence for the existence of a church there prior to the Viking Age. Whether the church at Middleton was subsidiary to Pickering in the pre-Viking period is unclear, but it seems they were part of

⁵⁶ Blair, 'Introduction: From Minster to Parish Church', p. 7; Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, pp. 291ff.; Mason, 'The Role of the English Parishioner, 1100–1500', p. 18; Morris, 'Churches in York and its Hinterland', p. 198, n. 5.

⁵⁷ Cambridge and Rollason, 'Debate: The Pastoral Organization of the Anglo-Saxon Church'; Pickles, *Power, Religious Patronage and Pastoral Care*.

⁵⁸ Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, p. 296.

⁵⁹ Hadley, *The Northern Danelaw*, p. 206; Morris, *Churches in the Landscape*, p. 134.

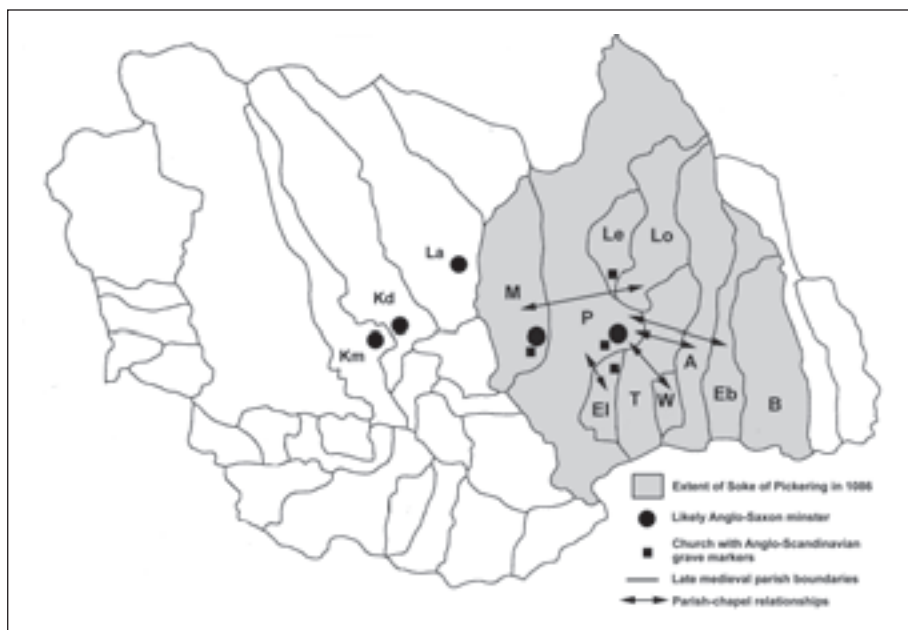


Figure 6.1. Manors, churches, and chapels in the soke of Pickering, North Riding of Yorkshire. Figure by the author.

a cluster of Anglo-Saxon minsters in the area, including the nearby parishes of Lastingham, Kirkby Moorside, and Kirkdale. Along with Pickering and Middleton, the churches at Ellerburn and Levisham feature tenth-century commemorative sculpture. Both their early acquisition of burial rights and proximity to Pickering suggest that they may have been the first ‘new’ churches within the *parochia*, as the minster’s control began to weaken.

Yet despite the apparent fragmentation of Pickering’s original *parochia*, the relationship between Pickering’s manors and churches persisted into the later Middle Ages, long after the dissolution of the minster system. Ellerburn, Allerston, Ebberston, and Wilton were recorded as dependent parochial chapels of Pickering at least until the mid-thirteenth century, and Lockton was a chapel of Middleton.⁶⁰ Although no written evidence exists for Levisham, Thornton, or Brompton, a similar mother church-chapel relationship between those churches and Pickering or Middleton may well have existed at one time. The soke of Pickering is a clear example of the close ties between secular and

⁶⁰ Page, *Victoria History of the North Riding of Yorkshire*, II, 423.

parochial organization, and a demonstration of the way that these relationships could persist meaningfully not only through major tenurial changes engendered by the Viking invasion and Norman Conquest, but also through systemic ecclesiastical changes like the fragmentation of the minster system.

Despite the apparent continuity of church and manorial relationships, the process of transformation from minster to parish church essentially changed the purpose of the local church, its pastoral role in the village community, and its relationship with lordship.⁶¹ While the minster network was dissolving, large numbers of new churches were being founded alongside them, and both the old minsters and new churches found their way into the nascent parish system. Interestingly, the presence of Anglo-Scandinavian sculpture at both Pickering and Middleton suggests that by the tenth century, these once-minster churches were as much under the influence of Anglo-Scandinavian secular lordship as the newly founded patronal chapels. Yet sites of early ecclesiastical importance did not lose their status: Middleton and Pickering became fully fledged parish churches with dependencies, while apparently tenth-century foundations like Ellerburn could remain subsidiary chapels well into the later Middle Ages. Major manors would have attracted powerful landlords, and it may have been to their social and financial advantage to appropriate the manor's church as well, and the tithes and dues it received from subordinate churches. In this way, many of the minsters of the eighth and ninth centuries became patronal and eventually parish churches, retaining many of their rights and benefits as mother churches, but also forced to share parochial status with a new generation of independent foundations.

Concomitant with these systemic changes in local churches were major physical alterations, which continued into the subsequent centuries. One of the most significant changes was the firm establishment of stone as the primary medium of architectural and commemorative patronage. As has been revealed in excavations at churches such as Wharram Percy,⁶² Rivenhall,⁶³ and Raunds,⁶⁴ small timber or stone churches of the tenth century were steadily being rebuilt, often many times over, in the late eleventh and twelfth centuries as part of a

⁶¹ Blair, 'Debate: Ecclesiastical Organization and Pastoral Care'; Cambridge and Rollason, 'Debate: The Pastoral Organization of the Anglo-Saxon Church'.

⁶² Beresford and Hurst, *Wharram Percy*.

⁶³ Rodwell and Rodwell, *Rivenhall*.

⁶⁴ Boddington, *Raunds Furnells*.



Map 6.2. Distribution of Anglo-Scandinavian sculpture in the North Riding of Yorkshire. Map by the author.

process that has been referred to as the ‘Great Rebuilding’ of churches.⁶⁵ It has long been assumed that the majority of churches built prior to the eleventh century were wooden and were systematically replaced by stone ones, although Richard Morris has recently suggested that the use of wood in early churches is likely to have been regionally variable, rather than universal.⁶⁶ In any case, stone was undoubtedly a central characteristic of the new rebuilding programme, and its physical properties were fundamental to the messages of permanence and power that patrons wished to send.⁶⁷

Alongside this process of rebuilding, the use of various forms of stone sculpture to commemorate the burial of lay individuals at local churches was also becoming common.⁶⁸ No architecture from the tenth century survives in the North Riding of Yorkshire, as it does in other parts of England, but the skeleton of the region’s eventual parochial system can be seen in the distribution of

⁶⁵ Gem, ‘The English Parish Church in the 11th and Early 12th Centuries’, p. 23; Morris, ‘Churches in York and its Hinterland’, p. 191.

⁶⁶ Morris, ‘Local Churches in the Anglo-Saxon Countryside’, p. 184.

⁶⁷ Morris, ‘Local Churches in the Anglo-Saxon Countryside’, p. 185.

⁶⁸ Richards, *Viking Age England*, p. 160; Stocker, ‘Monuments and Merchants’, p. 180.

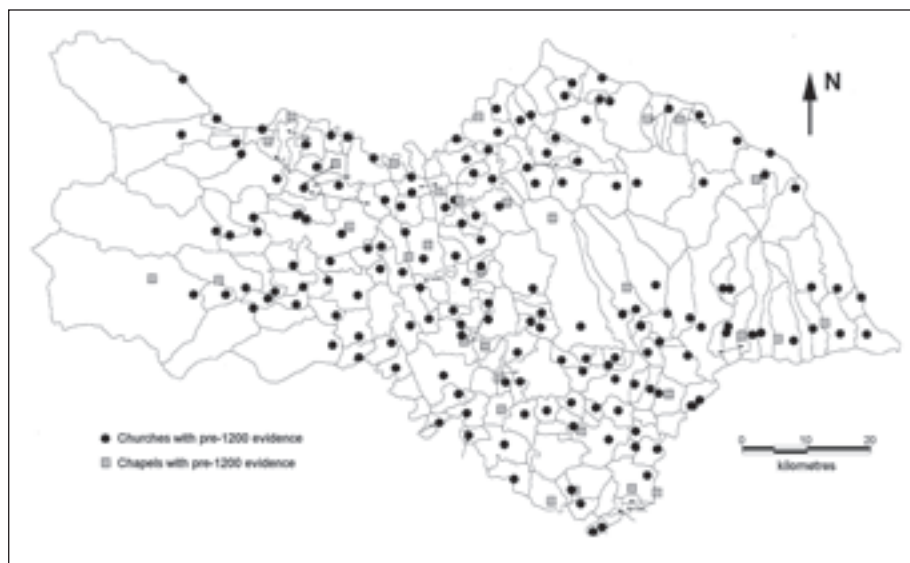


Map 6.3. Churches and chapels in the North Riding of Yorkshire, c. 1100.
Map by the author.

Anglo-Scandinavian commemorative evidence. These monuments, which are all found on the sites of later medieval parish churches, are likely to indicate the sites of churches which existed in the tenth century and which were the predecessors of the current parish churches (Map 6.2).

When evidence from Domesday Book and from architectural fabric, fittings, and grave monuments prior to c. 1100 is collated and mapped, it demonstrates that by the end of the eleventh century, the denser 'parochial' network of churches was taking shape, although it was not yet fully fleshed out (Map 6.3). At least 60 per cent of the North Riding's later medieval parish churches existed by this point, although there is evidence for only a few parochial chapels at this time. The most notable gaps in church provision occur in the topographically and agriculturally marginal regions of the North York Moors and Pennines. This is unsurprising, as these areas were probably settled and nucleated later than the rest of the North Riding.⁶⁹ A similar collation of evidence shows that by the end of the twelfth century, however, nearly all parish churches (92%) were already in existence, as were half of the parochial chapels (Map 6.4). By comparing the maps, it is clear that the basic framework of the parochial system

⁶⁹ Harrison, 'New Settlements in the North York Moors, 1086–1340', p. 19.



Map 6.4. Churches and chapels in the North Riding of Yorkshire, c. 1200. Map by the author.

was set before c. 1100, as the twelfth-century map shows an increase in the density of the provision of parish churches, but not a great expansion of the regions covered. Indeed, the main change between the end of the twelfth century and the final late medieval parochial structure is the much greater provision of parochial chapels from the thirteenth century onwards. After the twelfth century, canon law assured the stability of the parochial system by preventing chapels from usurping parochial status.⁷⁰ In addition, the widespread utilization of stone in local church architecture undoubtedly had a stabilizing effect on parochialization. It is debatable whether the permanence of stone churches helped fossilize parishes, or whether the gradual solidification of parish boundaries and relationships encouraged patrons to build in stone, allowing them to make their mark on what had become a significant reference point in the tenuous and social landscape. In either case, this material dimension, driven in large part by secular patronage, may have been a more practical and effective codifier of the parochial system than ecclesiastical legalities.

⁷⁰ Owen, *Church and Society in Medieval Lincolnshire*, p. 5.

The Role of Lordship

In all of these processes taking place in the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries — adaptation, foundation, building, rebuilding, and commemorating — we can see the hand of secular lordship. While it is certain that both the ecclesiastical community and non-elite laity also played some role in these processes, a strong case can be made that in northern England, in both the Anglo-Scandinavian and Anglo-Norman periods, the needs of lordly authority and social identity were primary drivers of patronage in the local church. Studies of patterns of landholding and manorialization have shown that a class of lesser landholding lords began to emerge from at least the tenth century,⁷¹ and they continued to gain power and tenurial wealth throughout the eleventh and twelfth centuries.⁷² Their close affiliation with local churches is explicitly laid out in the eleventh-century ‘promotion law’ that specified that to achieve the rank of *thegn* — a middling elite status associated with royal retainers — a man needed not only five hides of land, but a ‘bell-house’ (often interpreted as a church), amongst other lordly apparatus.⁷³ These early landholding lords are likely also the subjects depicted on some Anglo-Scandinavian grave monuments, which were erected near the churches they founded. These men display the trappings of military lordship — a spear, a sword, a shield, a helmet — and on some monuments scenes of elite leisure, such as deer hunting, play out as well (Figure 6.2). Admittedly, most Anglo-Scandinavian monuments do not directly portray lords, but the likelihood is that a great many of these gravestones once commemorated members of the elite laity, given the regularity with which secular themes accompany Christian imagery. Although some forms and decorative schemes were borrowed from the monuments of the pre-Scandinavian period, Anglo-Scandinavian sculpture appears to contrast markedly in both purpose and patronage from Anglo-Saxon monuments.⁷⁴ The earlier monuments are not only much fewer in number, but they are often larger in scale, are strongly associated with the early Northumbrian monasteries, and use figural representations to depict overtly religious, rather than secular, themes.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Baxter, ‘Lordship and Labour’, p. 100; Saunders, ‘Class, Space and “Feudal” Identities’, p. 221; Hadley, *The Northern Danelaw*.

⁷² Crouch, *The Image of the Aristocracy in Britain*.

⁷³ Williams, ‘A Bell-house and a Burh-geat’, p. 225.

⁷⁴ Stocker, ‘Monuments and Merchants’, p. 193.

⁷⁵ Lang, *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture*, III; Lang, *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture*, VI.



Figure 6.2.
Middleton, North
Riding of Yorkshire 1
and 2: depictions of
Anglo-Scandinavian
lordship on tenth-century
commemorative sculpture.
Photography by T.
Middlemass, copyright
*Corpus of Anglo-Saxon
Stone Sculpture*.

They are thus more likely to have been made for ecclesiastical patrons and audiences, or were at least created under ecclesiastical control and informed by sophisticated biblical knowledge. In contrast, Anglo-Scandinavian sculpture was closely correlated to commemoration of the lesser manorial elite at village churches, and therefore bears a closer conceptual relationship with post-Conquest monuments than it does with those of the preceding period.

Although minor lords have readily been attributed with a great deal of influence in the local church in the pre-Conquest period,⁷⁶ their potential contribution to the form and fabric of the church often seems to be underestimated afterwards. Instead, monastic institutions, the new Norman magnates of Domesday Book, and the village community often get credited with shaping the later par-

⁷⁶ For example, Morris, *Churches in the Landscape*, pp. 129, 138, 163.

ish church, while the minor elite are sidelined or glossed over.⁷⁷ When the local elite have been acknowledged, it has primarily been in the guise of the gentry of the late Middle Ages,⁷⁸ who are documented as donating to churches in their wills, and who commemorated themselves with brasses, tombs, and chantries. While monasteries, magnates, and local lords all undoubtedly played a patronal role in churches in the aftermath of the Norman Conquest, the following sections will explore what evidence there is for each of these patronal groups and discuss why local lords, particularly, benefited from the audiences and opportunities provided by the local church.

Monasteries and Magnates

Although magnates and monastic institutions dominate the documentary record of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, their real influence on the material culture of the local church may have been much more peripheral.⁷⁹ Due to the wave of alienations of parish churches and their tithes to monasteries from the twelfth century onwards, monastic institutions were technically the owners of the majority of local churches.⁸⁰ Data compiled from the Victoria County History volumes for the North Riding of Yorkshire indicate that by the end of the twelfth century, 119 of the North Riding's 256 parish churches and chapels were in ecclesiastical hands, or had been at one time.⁸¹ However, it is too simplistic to assign the wealth of twelfth-century church-building evidence solely to the pious enthusiasm of new and wealthy monastic owners. In visitation records, religious houses were often chided for the material neglect of the churches in their care,⁸² suggesting that they were not habitually contributing to church building programmes. This possibility is strengthened by the acknowledgement that St Mary's Abbey, despite being the greatest of York's monastic houses and a major owner of land and churches across Yorkshire, seems to have

⁷⁷ Morris, *Churches in the Landscape*, pp. 352–53.

⁷⁸ Graves, 'Social Space in the English Medieval Parish Church', p. 311; Saul, *Scenes from Provincial Life, 1280–1400*.

⁷⁹ Douglas and Greenaway, *English Historical Documents: 1042–1189*, p. 74.

⁸⁰ Kemp, 'Monastic Possession of Parish Churches', p. 134; Pounds, *A History of the English Parish*, p. 202.

⁸¹ Page, *Victoria History of the North Riding of Yorkshire*, I and II.

⁸² Morris, *Churches in the Landscape*, p. 323; Platt, *The Parish Churches of Medieval England*, p. 98.

had comparably little effect upon the physical aspects of the churches in its possession.⁸³

The ecclesiastical institutions possessed such a sheer quantity of churches that direct involvement in all of their building programmes was unfeasible.⁸⁴ Furthermore, the difficulty that some monasteries had in retaining churches after they had been granted them demonstrates that secular lords may still have held the balance of power.⁸⁵ Many of the North Riding's churches remained in the possession of secular manors throughout the Middle Ages, so despite the general trend towards alienation, a great number of laypeople continued to wield control and gain economic benefit from local churches. Even so, monastic ownership may have made patronage and the seigneurial relationship with the local church a more complex and negotiated affair than it had been before the twelfth century. This is made explicit in one documented example, where the Abbot of Whitby gave the manorial lord Aschetin of Hawsker the freedom to found, endow, and build a chapel at Hawsker in 1148, on the condition that he then alienated the chapel to the abbey.⁸⁶ In the wake of appropriation, secular patrons may have been especially keen to preserve an element of control in the church, perhaps making them even more likely to spend lavishly on personal patronage such as funerary monuments, and elements of the fabric such as aisles and chapels, of which they might claim some level of 'ownership'.

Similar to monasteries, magnates in charge of a great number of manors are less likely than their manorial counterparts to have intervened in the planning and management of villages,⁸⁷ and thus they are also less likely to have been involved with the physical form of the parish church. They seem to have viewed local churches primarily as assets to donate to monasteries, where their primary patronal interests lay, rather than as foci for patronage in their own right.⁸⁸ While the surviving documentary record is admittedly patchy, there are few examples of magnates in the Anglo-Norman North Riding directly patronizing local churches. William Espec is recorded as founding the chapel at Bilsdale,⁸⁹

⁸³ Butler, 'Symbols on Medieval Memorials', p. 91; McCall, *Richmondshire Churches*, p. 30.

⁸⁴ Barlow, *The English Church, 1000–1066*, p. 204.

⁸⁵ Burton, 'Monasteries and Parish Churches', p. 47.

⁸⁶ Atkinson, *Cartularium Abbathiae de Whitby*, pp. 179–81; Kemp, 'Monastic Possession of Parish Churches', p. 140.

⁸⁷ Everson and others, *Change and Continuity*, p. 16.

⁸⁸ Golding, 'Anglo-Norman Knightly Burial', p. 40.

⁸⁹ Page, *Victoria History of the North Riding of Yorkshire*, I, 504.

and Count William of Aumale and King Richard I were both likely involved in the ambitious twelfth-century architectural plan at Scarborough, although that programme may actually have been monastic, as an alien priory had been given permission to establish itself there.⁹⁰ In the East and West Ridings of Yorkshire, there are possible physical examples of the high elite leaving their mark on parish churches. At Weaverthorpe (East Riding), the 'Herbert W ...' named on the sundial has been interpreted as Herbert of Winchester, chancellor to Henry I, marking his building or rebuilding of the church *c.* 1110.⁹¹ At Conisbrough (West Riding), an elaborate Romanesque tomb chest perhaps commemorates William III de Warenne, holder of the Honour of Conisbrough, a vast collection of West Riding manors. Even then, William's true priorities seem to have lain elsewhere — he was actually buried in his family monastery of Lewes Priory (Sussex), although perhaps he also saw some value in preserving his legacy through a cenotaph at the local church near his honour's castle.⁹²

The Minor Elite

The minor elite also participated in monastic benefaction, as foundation or endowment of a monastery had positive spiritual implications and was thought to be the holiest action a secular patron could take.⁹³ But while small-scale contribution to the endowment of a monastery was a common pursuit for many lords, founding a house or donating a substantial part of the fabric of a monastic building was an immense financial undertaking that was beyond the reach of the vast majority of the landholding elite.⁹⁴ As such, monastic patronage by minor lords often took the form of contributions to the monastery their overlord favoured, rather than striking out on their own. Contributing to an overlord's monastery was a way of demonstrating loyalty and earning favour, while simultaneously displaying wealth, status, and political affiliation with a particular magnate to wider society.⁹⁵ Robert de Rosel's twelfth-century donation of Easington parish church to Guisborough Priory 'for the health of his own soul

⁹⁰ Crouch, 'Church Life in Medieval Scarborough', p. 49; Hoey, 'The Medieval Architecture of St. Mary's Scarborough', p. 66.

⁹¹ Addleshaw, *Rectors, Vicars, and Patrons*, p. 13.

⁹² Wood, 'Geometric Patterns', pp. 45, 56.

⁹³ Addleshaw, *Rectors, Vicars, and Patrons*, p. 6.

⁹⁴ Burton, *The Yorkshire Nunneries in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, p. 24.

⁹⁵ Cownie, 'Gloucester Abbey, 1066–1135', pp. 148–49.

and that of Adam de Brus his lord⁹⁶ is an excellent example of the control that subtenant lords could hold over the fate of the local church, but also the importance of the overlord's perception of his patronage. In the North Riding, lords with locally derived names like Phillip de Eryholme, Adam de Ingleby, and Pain de Wykeham also all granted their eponymous churches to monasteries in the twelfth century,⁹⁷ demonstrating that primary control of the parish church by local rather than magnatial lords was not an unusual occurrence.

Monasteries sometimes competed directly with parish churches for the benefaction of local lords, and in some cases appear to have lost out. Roger de Aske, who founded Marrick Priory, a Benedictine nunnery, was also the major patron of the parish church at Marrick. He is documented as being buried, and presumably commemorated, in his chapel at the east end of the parish church, rather than in the priory.⁹⁸ This is a significant gesture, as it suggests that, while the patronage of parish churches may not have commanded the same spiritual benefits as monastic institutions, the centrality of the local church in manorial life meant that a statement of memory and legacy was more effective there than in a minor religious house. The opportunity to establish a private family chapel was also an advantage to be found primarily within parochial churches, rather than monastic ones. Patronage of local churches thus was not just a 'second best' recourse forced upon lords by their financial limitations. The considerable expenditure on local churches in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, especially in the latter part of that period when religious houses were a viable alternative, reveals it instead as a choice that was made with very specific social benefits in mind.

Monasteries and castles, as bastions of the high elite, held a high profile and presumably social cachet for the patrons, but the local church offered other distinct incentives. In the monastery, the local lord's expenditure would likely be dwarfed by that of greater magnates, or its efficacy would be lost amidst the numerous smaller benefactions of lords of a similar station. But when patronizing at the local church, the lord's architectural or commemorative material could become the dominant force in that social milieu. Rather than being superseded by effigies and tombs of greater artistry and importance, the stone commemorative monuments of the local elite family would have stood out in a church interior with few burials, or in a churchyard characterized by comparatively ephemeral grave markers. The ideal for local lords was no doubt to patronize both

⁹⁶ Page, *Victoria History of the North Riding of Yorkshire*, II, 342–43.

⁹⁷ Page, *Victoria History of the North Riding of Yorkshire*, I, 83; II, 248, 499.

⁹⁸ Tillotson, *Marrick Priory*, p. 4.

monasteries and parish churches to the extent that they could, thus establishing their name and reputation in aristocratic, national circles, while securing their local basis of power. As either an alternative or a complement to monastic and military patronage, commemorative and architectural expenditure in the local church was a legitimate and effective option to patrons in need of establishing their place in a new and somewhat tenuous social hierarchy.

It is likely that, despite the great financial potential of monastic institutions and magnates, most monumental and architectural work in the local church was carried out by secular patrons, because they had far more to gain from local patronage. Monasteries, unless they had a close physical association with a parish church or chapel, had little reason to reinforce their standing in the village community by patronizing a local church. They had their own, more important, religious building to look after, for which expenditure must have been prioritized. The high aristocracy, too, had interests further afield, far beyond individual manors or counties, and they needed the national platform that monastic benefaction provided more than the regional consolidation that the parish church offered. Minor lords, however, drew much more of their social status and power from their role in the manorial milieu.⁹⁹ Thus they had to be concerned with their standing in the village community and the wider locality, and the parish church was a key vehicle through which a patron's public and personal image could be improved.

Several recent studies in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire have made a compelling argument against the assumption that magnates and monasteries were the driving secular force behind churches in the post-Conquest period.¹⁰⁰ Everson and Stocker clearly demonstrate that when Anglo-Norman tower-building was carried out by lords in Lincolnshire, it was not the tenant-in-chief, but the next level down — the subtenants, reeves, and bailiffs who exercised authority on a manorial scale — who were the key sponsors.¹⁰¹ They also make the convincing case for a number of these towers being sponsored by the collective effort of free tenant landholders, particularly when the churches seem to occupy the green or common land within the village, and a large number of 'sokemen' are recorded as living in the vill at Domesday.¹⁰² However, northern

⁹⁹ Mason, 'The Role of the English Parishioner, 1100–1500', p. 18.

¹⁰⁰ Everson and Stocker, 'The Common Steeple?'; Shapland, 'St Mary's, Broughton, Lincolnshire'.

¹⁰¹ Everson and Stocker, 'The Common Steeple?', pp. 119–20.

¹⁰² Everson and Stocker, 'The Common Steeple?', p. 120.

England differs substantially from Lincolnshire in its comparative lack of a free class of tenant. Only fifteen freemen and forty-four sokemen — fewer than in some Lincolnshire villages — are recorded in the whole of the North Riding in 1086.¹⁰³ Thus it seems likely that in Yorkshire, an even greater part of the rise in building and commemoration in the local church in the twelfth century was due to the actions of local lords.

Ecclesiastical Patronage in the Anglo-Norman Transition

As discussed above, the evidence from the North Riding shows that local churches were well established and the rebuilding process had begun before the Normans arrived. Nevertheless, the Norman invasion and tenurial takeover did profoundly affect church building. Post-Conquest landholders, whether ethnically Norman or not, quickly recognized the social currency that church patronage held, and they accelerated what their predecessors had started. The explicit association between landholding lords and the church stated in the pre-Conquest 'promotion law' was not abandoned, even if it was no longer a legal requirement — church patronage had become an essential part of the practice of lordship and a fundamental aspect of lordly identity.

A graph over time of the corpus of architectural evidence from the North Riding, compiled from various architectural analyses¹⁰⁴ and fieldwork,¹⁰⁵ clearly demonstrates the intensity of investment in church-building throughout the twelfth century (Figure 6.3). Over 70 per cent of the parish churches in the North Riding retain at least fragmentary architectural fabric from the twelfth century, and that was undoubtedly even higher in reality, as comprehensive late medieval building programmes have sometimes overwritten earlier work. In the pre-1100 period, many churches were in existence, but there were also clear pockets of presence and absence of stone architecture. By the twelfth century, these regional peculiarities had been entirely overwritten. Multiple eleventh- and twelfth-century building phases are also common at North Riding churches, further highlighting the intensity of twelfth-century patronage. Eighty per cent of the churches with pre-1100 architecture also have evidence of building later in the twelfth century, indicating that many churches that

¹⁰³ Darby and Maxwell, *Domesday Geography of Northern England*, p. 501.

¹⁰⁴ For example, Page, *Victoria History of the North Riding of Yorkshire*, 1; Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Yorkshire: The North Riding*.

¹⁰⁵ McClain, 'Patronage, Power, and Identity', pp. 104ff.

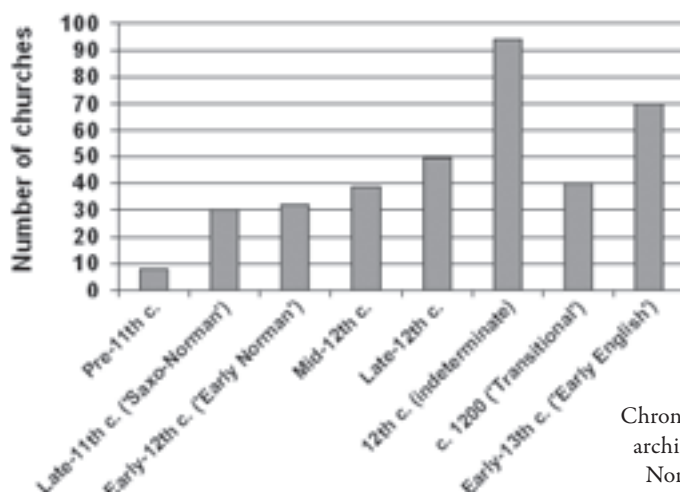


Figure 6.3.
Chronological distribution of
architectural evidence in the
North Riding of Yorkshire.
Figure by the author.

were *already* stone just before 1100 were being rebuilt or added to very soon afterwards. Forty-one churches in the North Riding have building phases from two periods within the twelfth century, and some, such as Pickering, Salton, Hackness, and Masham, have architectural evidence from the early, mid-, and late twelfth century.¹⁰⁶

The programme of building and rebuilding local churches had already begun around the time of the Conquest, but the lordly elite continued that process throughout the whole of the twelfth century. The early stages of the rebuilding process may owe much to the turbulent social and political state of post-Conquest Yorkshire, and lords' need to secure a place in a new social hierarchy. For Norman local lords that had recently been installed, the tenuous state of their control would undoubtedly be strengthened through a new or rebuilt church. It is also possible, especially in the immediate aftermath of the Conquest, that the local lords in charge of church building and estate management were native landholders who had been pushed down the tenurial hierarchy into tenancy.¹⁰⁷ These demoted lords would have been acutely concerned with maintaining their status and social relevance in the face of the new hegemony, and building large, accomplished churches helped to distinguish them as valuable members

¹⁰⁶ McClain, 'Patronage, Power, and Identity', p. 203.

¹⁰⁷ Dalton, *Conquest, Anarchy, and Lordship*, p. 9; Garnett, *Conquered England*, p. 23.

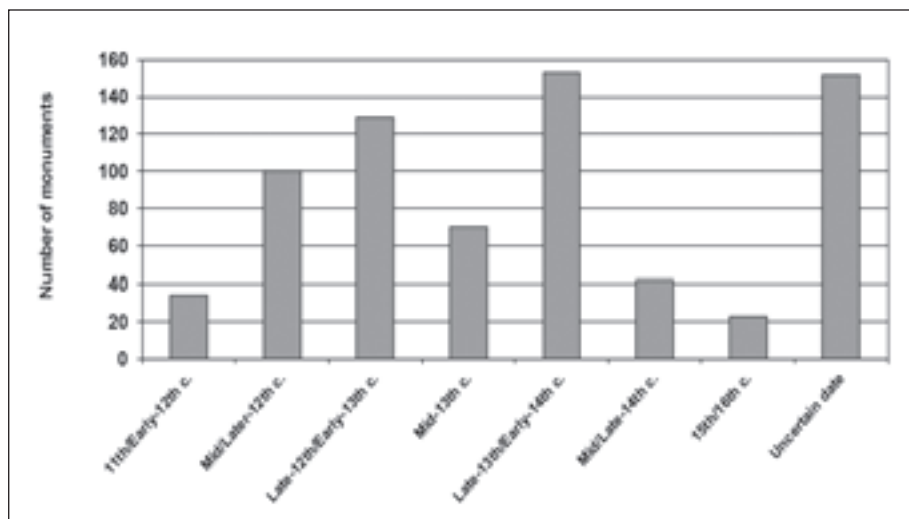


Figure 6.4. Chronological distribution of cross slab grave monuments in the North Riding of Yorkshire. Figure by the author.

of the ruling group.¹⁰⁸ Church patronage was not only a highly effective means of negotiating a complex socio-political transition, but also a way to ensure that one emerged as and remained a member of the dominant group long after it was resolved.

Alongside the escalation of building programmes, there was a similar rise in commemorative practice throughout the twelfth century (Figure 6.4). As in the Anglo-Scandinavian period, the imagery on post-Conquest funerary monuments provides corroboration that the manorial elite were primary drivers of commemorative patronage at the local church. While cross slab monuments do not feature sculptural scenes or portraits, the trappings of lordship are nevertheless clear (Figure 6.5). In addition to their central crosses, northern cross slabs often have secondary emblems, which most likely denote a chosen aspect of the deceased's identity and are probably signifiers of status or occupation.¹⁰⁹ In the North Riding, the sword is by far the most common secondary emblem, appearing on 60 per cent of the slabs with emblems,¹¹⁰ and they are the pre-

¹⁰⁸ Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, p. 417.

¹⁰⁹ Butler, 'The Labours of the Months', p. 246; Ryder, *Cross Slab Grave Stones in West Yorkshire*, p. 61.

¹¹⁰ McClain, 'Medieval Cross Slabs in North Yorkshire', p. 172.

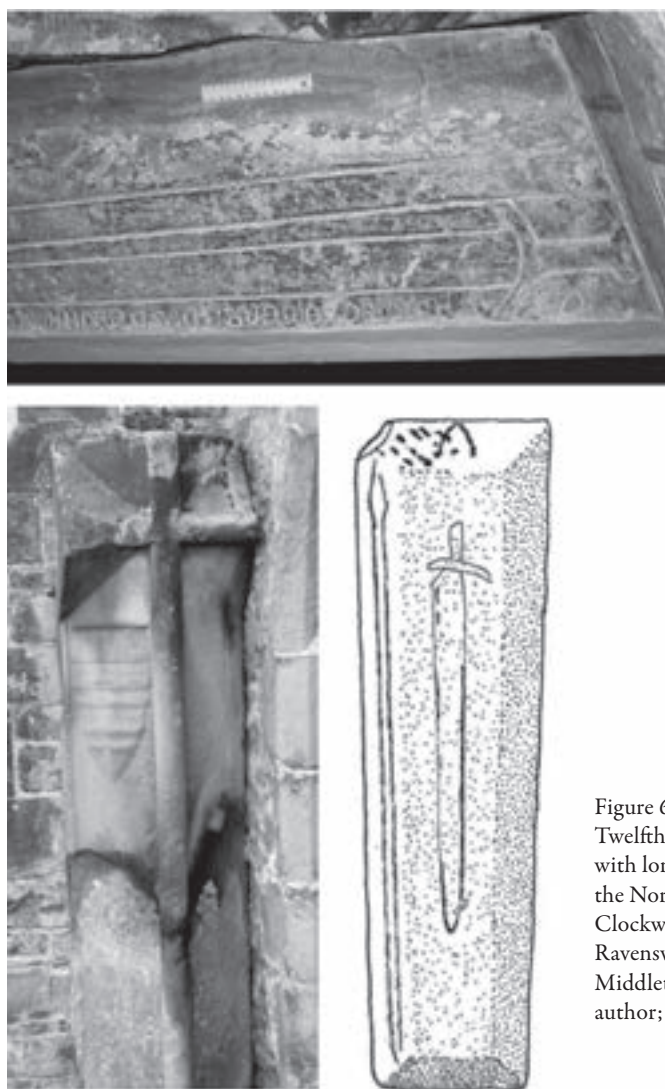


Figure 6.5.
Twelfth-century cross slabs
with lordly imagery, all from
the North Riding of Yorkshire.
Clockwise from top: Kirby
Ravensworth 2; Birdforth 1;
Middleton Tyas 2. Photos by the
author; drawing by Peter F. Ryder.

dominant emblem in other county surveys as well.¹¹¹ While at a basic level the sword emblem represents a commemorated male, it is most likely indicative of a man of at least some status.¹¹² In some cases, such as on monuments at Kildale,

¹¹¹ Ryder, *The Medieval Cross Slab Grave Cover in County Durham*; Ryder, *Cross Slab Grave Stones in West Yorkshire*; Ryder, *The Medieval Cross Slab Grave Covers in Cumbria*.

¹¹² Ryder, *Cross Slab Grave Stones in West Yorkshire*, p. 61.

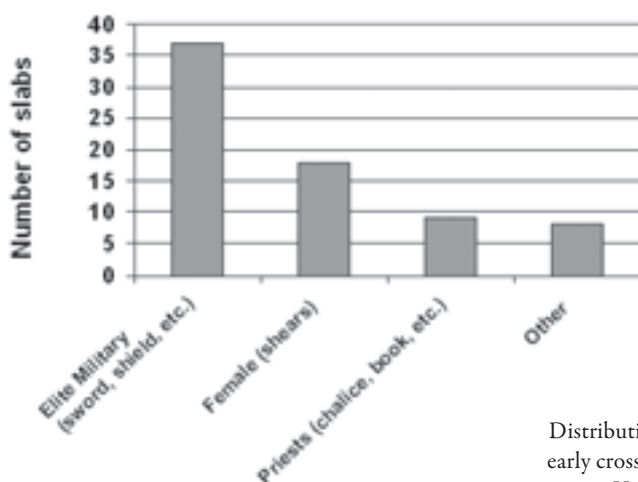


Figure 6.6.
Distribution of secondary emblems on
early cross slabs in the North Riding of
Yorkshire. Figure by the author.

East Harlsey, and Kirby Ravensworth, the sword emblem is paired with inscriptions or heraldry that undoubtedly denote patrons of the knightly class.

The frequency of sword emblems is particularly notable in the early centuries of cross slab use, where swords appear on a clear majority of emblem slabs, often with other military accoutrements such as shields, daggers, and spears (Figure 6.6).¹¹³ Before the thirteenth century, the only other emblems that appear with any frequency are the shears, which are generally agreed to represent women, and symbols such as chalices and books, which represent priests.¹¹⁴ Even though a wider range of secondary emblems began to appear from the thirteenth century onwards, indicating a broadening class of patrons investing in cross slab monuments, swords continued to be the dominant emblem on grave slabs throughout the whole of the medieval period.¹¹⁵ Investment in the parish church and burial and commemoration in its grounds were clearly of paramount importance for manorial lords over the whole of the Middle Ages. By choosing the sword emblem as prominent imagery on their commemorative monuments, these patrons ensured that their membership in an elite, lordly social identity was displayed prominently and permanently.

¹¹³ McClain, 'Local Churches and the Conquest of the North', p. 156.

¹¹⁴ Butler, 'The Labours of the Months', p. 248; Ryder, *Cross Slab Grave Stones in West Yorkshire*, p. 63.

¹¹⁵ McClain, 'Cross Slab Monuments in the Late Middle Ages', p. 57.

Conclusions

Although local churches have often received less attention than larger, more obviously elite buildings such as monasteries and castles, they bore a social significance for lords in the Anglo-Scandinavian and Anglo-Norman periods which far outweighed their 'minor' status. Local churches and grave monuments can give us particular insight into how the transition of the Norman Conquest actually occurred, because unlike castles and monasteries, they existed in large numbers in the north before the Normans arrived, and they were regularly encountered in almost every settlement. Villages and their churches thus became the real 'front lines' in the negotiation of the transition, which was carried out between manorial lords, who were the primary patrons of these churches and monuments, and the village communities which they needed to work effectively and live peacefully.

The access that local churches provided to the regional and local community had particular resonance in the aftermath of the Norman Conquest, when the relatively tenuous political control that the new ruling class held in northern England needed to be consolidated quickly and effectively. It is often assumed that this was primarily carried out through a heavy and indiscriminate imposition of power, through actions like castle-building and the Harrying of the North.¹¹⁶ However, the churches and funerary monuments of the north can help us rewrite that traditional history of fractious northerners and destructive Normans, achieving a much more nuanced understanding of how the transition was actually accomplished and the amalgamation of new cultures occurred. By examining change on local and regional scales, rather than only at the highest levels of buildings and bureaucracy, it allows us to access what David Bates has called the 'complex process of local negotiation [...] and the creation of new social relationships'¹¹⁷ which really characterized a 'national' event such as the Norman Conquest.

Clearly many churches were built with architectural techniques and decorative schemes after the Conquest that can be identified as characteristically 'Norman', but this process was not simply a 'Norman' replacement of 'Anglo-Saxon' churches as part of the process of Conquest. We know from the Yorkshire Domesday that post-Conquest northern manorial lords were

¹¹⁶ For example, Holt, *Colonial England*, p. 6; Kapelle, *The Norman Conquest of the North*, p. 120.

¹¹⁷ Bates, '1066: Does the Date Still Matter?', p. 457.

both new Norman knights and Anglo-Scandinavian landholders who retained tenure,¹¹⁸ so there can be no direct tie between ethnicity and architectural style. Indeed, fully developed 'Norman' architecture could stand side by side with contemporary work that was stylistically more 'late Anglo-Saxon' in character. Four neighbouring Yorkshire churches from the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries provide an excellent example of the diversity of architectural work that could be carried out in even a very small area (Figure 6.7). They also highlight the effects that localized circumstances could have on building programmes that might have previously been classified as part of an overarching post-Conquest 'rebuilding'. Lastingham, which was under monastic patronage from Whitby Abbey by 1078,¹¹⁹ features a grand but partially completed church, constructed in a mature early Norman style. Middleton possesses a fine Saxo-Norman west tower of the type seen in the region in the late eleventh century, and perhaps received this distinction because of its history as an Anglo-Saxon minster and a high-status Anglo-Scandinavian church. Ellerburn and Levisham, on the other hand, are both small, towerless churches containing work that is dated to the early twelfth century,¹²⁰ but which is more reminiscent in style of 'Saxo-Norman' than Norman work. These churches had also been established in the Anglo-Scandinavian period, but they occupied isolated locations and were dependent chapelries and sokes of Pickering,¹²¹ which may explain why they were still being constructed in plain and idiosyncratic styles at a time when other, more important parish churches and patrons of the early twelfth century (e.g. St Mary's Whitby, Pickering, Sheriff Hutton) were working in grander architectural terms.

Although our reliance on stylistic dating to establish architectural chronologies makes parsing the relationships between styles difficult, it is highly unlikely that 'Anglo-Saxon' and 'Saxo-Norman' work progressed in a linear manner into the Norman Romanesque style, in either architecture or sculpture. Rather, the use of each style in the decades after the Conquest depended on individual patronal circumstances which encompassed the availability of materials and craftsmen, wealth, artistic knowledge, and technological skill, as well as the socio-political situation of the patron, church, and manor. Building style undoubtedly carried meanings, but a patron's use of architectural style was not

¹¹⁸ Everson and Stocker, 'The Common Steeple?', pp. 119–20.

¹¹⁹ Burton, 'The Monastic Revival in Yorkshire', p. 44.

¹²⁰ Hall and Lang, 'St. Mary's Church, Levisham'; Hayes, *Levisham Moor*.

¹²¹ Page, *Victoria History of the North Riding of Yorkshire*, II, 423.

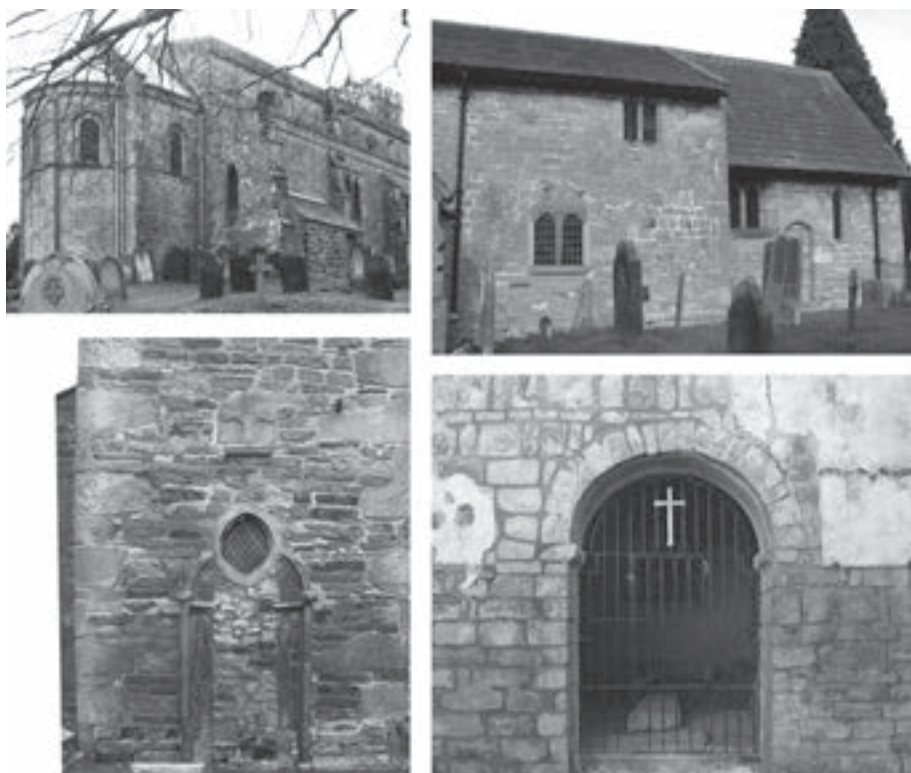


Figure 6.7. Four neighbouring churches with late eleventh- / early twelfth-century architectural fabric, North Riding of Yorkshire. Clockwise from top left: Lastingham, Ellerburn, Levisham, and Middleton. Photographs by the author.

an involuntary action directly reflecting his ethnic sympathies. It was instead a choice that was dependent on a variety of practical and ideological factors. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, patronizing the local church building was not so much an expression of 'Norman' cultural identity, but rather a proclamation of effective, beneficial lordship and a particular social status, in a material vocabulary which had been understood in the region since at least the tenth century. Cultivating specifically 'Norman' or 'native' identities seems to have been subjugated to the need to maintain elite identity and establish social standing in the region and locality.

Long before the Conquest, burial sculpture had also become one of the most distinctive characteristics of the northern counties of England. These monuments were part of a conspicuously northern tradition; as the *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture* has shown, there is comparatively little pre-Con-

quest grave sculpture to the south of Lincolnshire.¹²² The fact that individual stone grave monuments began to appear on a national scale after the Conquest, alongside stylistically 'Norman' architecture, might lead to the assumption that they were a purely Norman invention or importation. However, if cross slabs were unencumbered by previous English traditions of stone sculpture, we would expect more uniformity in their appearance across the country. In reality, there are far fewer cross slabs in the southern counties than in the north, and the forms and styles that monuments took on in the north in the eleventh and twelfth centuries do not appear everywhere else.¹²³ We see little of the standardization prevalent in southern cross slabs in northern regions, and the use of secondary emblems to signify the commemorated person is rarely found on southern monuments.¹²⁴ The early phases of northern cross slabs maintained the use of some pre-Conquest forms, such as standing crosses and markers, and they frequently amalgamated these old forms with new 'Norman' decorative motifs.¹²⁵ By enthusiastically adopting the tradition of stone commemorative monuments, particularly in these idiosyncratic styles, patrons were not only investing in materials beneficial to their social status and identity in the post-Conquest milieu, but may also have been embracing a defining material characteristic of 'northern-ness'.

Far from being oppressors of northern culture and identity, many members of the new ruling class were often overtly promoting regionally recognized modes of material culture after the Conquest, and they were actively becoming part of northern society and tradition through their patronal choices. Interestingly, minor lords were at the same time redefining what it meant to be 'northern', which now incorporated aspects of Norman culture alongside Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian heritage. If castles and great churches were the 'blunt instruments' of domination funded by the high aristocracy,¹²⁶ local churches and monuments were the more understated yet effective purveyors of cultural integration that made the Norman Conquest successful. Through them, manorial lords were

¹²² Cramp, *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture*, VII; Tweddle and others, *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture*, IV.

¹²³ Cf. Butler, 'Minor Medieval Monumental Sculpture in the East Midlands'; McClain, 'Medieval Cross Slabs in North Yorkshire'; Ryder, *The Medieval Cross Slab Grave Cover in County Durham*; Ryder, *The Medieval Cross Slab Grave Covers in Cumbria*.

¹²⁴ Butler, 'Symbols on Medieval Memorials', p. 247.

¹²⁵ McClain, 'Local Churches and the Conquest of the North', p. 162.

¹²⁶ Holt, *Colonial England*, p. 6.

smoothing the transition process by helping to create a new and vibrant Anglo-Norman culture and identity that was developing across the country, but one which had very particular regional and local resonances.

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POWER STRATEGIES IN THE EARLY MEDIEVAL CHURCHES OF GALICIA (AD 711–910)

José Carlos Sánchez-Pardo*

The Framework of This Study

The study of early medieval churches in north-west Iberia, specifically Galicia (Map 7.1), has a rich historiographical tradition.¹ However, the weight of this tradition has impeded the widening of this topic into new frames of discussion. Let us briefly examine this background and its limitations.

The majority of previous work on the early medieval church in north-western Spain has been solely based on written sources. The rich documentary records of this area have been repeatedly explored by historians since the first modern works of Enrique Flórez in the eighteenth century or A. López Ferreiro in the nineteenth.² Recent decades have witnessed renewed research into this topic, divisible into three broad topics. The first centres on the development of episcopal and parochial structures in early medieval north-west Spain, based on written sources like the so-called ‘Suevic Parish List’ (*Parochiale Suevum*, c. AD 570), the ‘Visigothic Council Acts’, and retrospective study of later medi-

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¹ This paper refers to ‘churches’ from a broad perspective to mean any kind of ecclesiastical foundation, including monasteries and chapels. When referring to specific cases, I have used specific terms where appropriate.

² Flórez, *España Sagrada*, XVII, XVIII, XIX, XXII; López Ferreiro, *Historia de la Santa A. M. Iglesia de Santiago*.

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Map 7.1. Galicia in north-west Iberia and Western Europe.
Map by the author using Demis WMS World Map.

eval ecclesiastical territorial organization.³ The second research concerns the role of proprietary churches in medieval society, particularly after the ninth century, when more documents are available.⁴ Thirdly, early medieval monastic

³ David, *Études historiques*; López Alsina, 'Parroquias y diócesis'; Isla Frez, *La sociedad gallega*; Díaz y Díaz, 'La Diócesis de Iria-Compostela'; Calleja Puerta, *La formación de la red parroquial*.

⁴ Loring García, 'Nobleza e iglesias propias'; D'Emilio, 'The Legend of Bishop Odoario'; Carzolio de Rossi, 'Participación monástica'; Davies, *Acts of Giving*.

life in Galicia has received significant attention,⁵ due to its high density and peculiarity in a European context.⁶ Unusual features of early medieval Galician monasteries include a pact limiting the power of abbots by monks, the creation of 'confederations'⁷ of small monasteries from the same area, and the importance of small family monasteries.⁸

It is undeniable that this body of research based on written sources has made an important contribution to our knowledge of this period, especially regarding religious life, ecclesiastical organization, and socio-economic dynamics. However, with some exceptions, the available documentation is scarce before the mid-ninth century, and it offers a partial view of relationships between churches, their founders, and wider society.

There are comparatively few studies of early medieval churches in Galicia from archaeological and art-historical perspectives, even though churches and monasteries are the most visible surviving aspect of the early medieval landscape. Older studies on 'pre-Romanesque' Galician architecture⁹ have only recently been revisited in the context of the intense debate on the chronology of the Visigothic churches. This concentrated on whether churches traditionally considered as having been built before the Islamic invasion of 711 could really correspond to later 'Mozarabic' influence. However, this debate is ongoing.¹⁰ Data from archaeological excavations is more abundant, but problematic. Many church excavations were carried out in the middle decades of the twentieth century without stratigraphic methodologies and were not subsequently written up. Much of the more recent rescue archaeology to have been undertaken remains unpublished and has typically encountered difficulties interpreting early building phases.¹¹ Overall, existing studies have focused on

⁵ Orlandis, *Estudios sobre instituciones monásticas*; Freire Camaniel, *El monacato gallego*; Díaz Martínez, *Formas económicas y sociales*; Díaz Martínez, 'Monasteries in a Peripheral Area'; Andrade Cernadas, 'Los modelos monásticos'.

⁶ Wood, *The Proprietary Church*, p. 147; Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, p. 76.

⁷ Groups of religious houses derived from a 'mother monastery' sharing religious and economic ties.

⁸ Orlandis, *Estudios sobre instituciones monásticas*; Andrade Cernadas, 'Los modelos monásticos'.

⁹ Núñez Rodríguez, *Arquitectura prerrománica*; Yzquierdo Perrín, *Arte Medieval*, pp. 1–160.

¹⁰ For synthesis, see Utrero Agudo, 'Late-Antique and Early Medieval Hispanic Churches'; Chavarría Arnau, 'Churches and Aristocracies'; Wickham, 'Asturias entre visigodos'.

¹¹ Sánchez-Pardo, 'Arqueología de las iglesias'.

ecclesiastical architecture at the expense of spatial and landscape contexts. Only recently is this picture starting to change,¹² and it is long overdue for early medieval Galician churches, as has been done for other European areas.¹³ This is particularly necessary if we bear in mind that churches were one of the main expressions of social power in this period, and the quantity of evidence for early medieval churches is relatively high in the Galician region.

This chapter will explore how the foundation of churches in north-west Spain was central to socio-political relations between the end of the Visigothic Kingdom in AD 711, following the Arab conquest of the Iberian Peninsula, and the end of the Asturian Kingdom in 910 after the death of King Alfonso III. These two centuries were a key period of socio-political and economic transformation, witnessing the progressive integration of Galicia into the wider Asturian Kingdom, the empowerment of local and supralocal aristocracies, and the intensification of agrarian production.¹⁴ During these two centuries, Galicia, a peripheral part of Europe, became the stage for multiple social interactions, balancing between continuities and changes in local communities and their elites, the imposition of royal power in the person of the counts, the arrival of Christian elites from the more dynamic Al-Andalus (South Peninsula), and the intermediary role of local and foreign bishops between the king and local communities. In this sense, eighth- to tenth-century Galicia provides a valuable case study into the role of churches in manifesting and channelling strategies of social power during a period of significant economic and political change and the opportunity to frame it within wider European debates.¹⁵

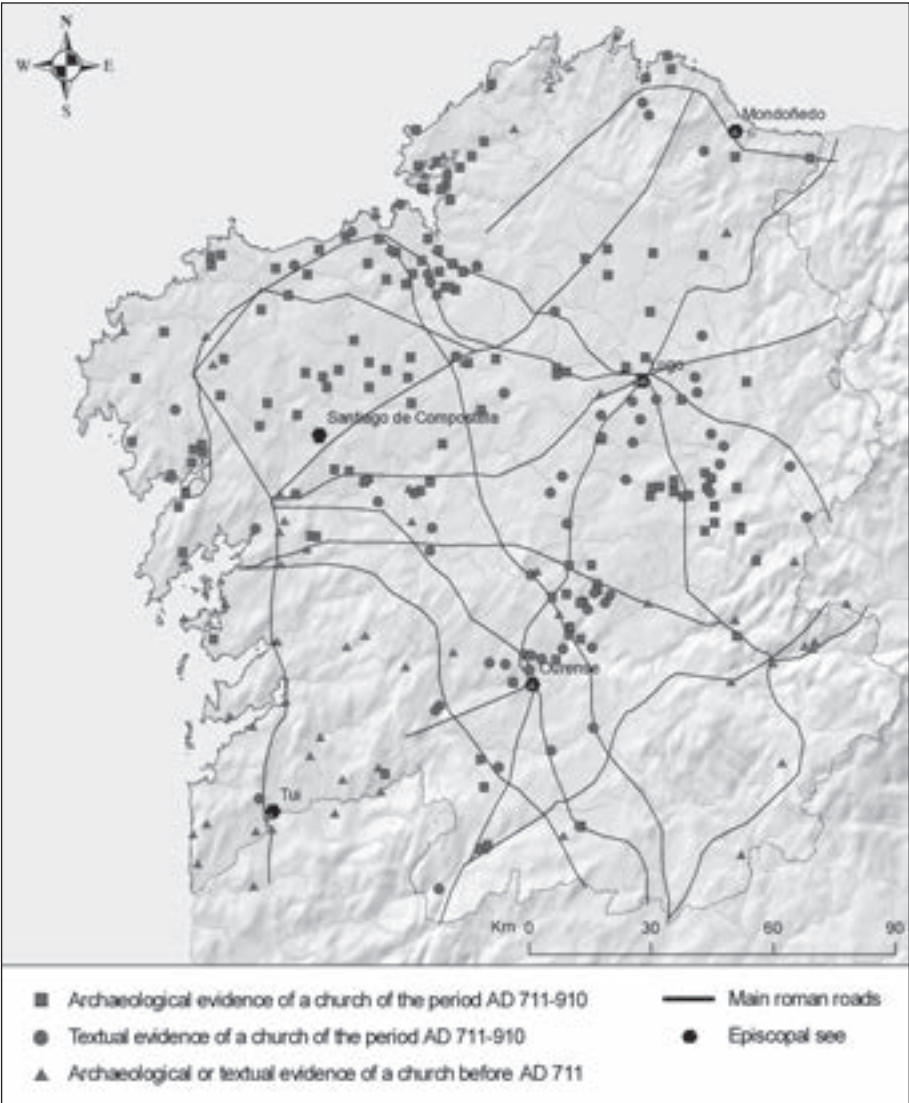
Churches are a valuable indicator of the strategies of early medieval power in Galicia due to their position at the centre of a range of local and supralocal social relationships. They were the only common social scenario shared by peasants, priests, local lords, counts, and bishops, and in that sense they are a good basis upon which to analyse topographies of power in the early medieval landscape of this region. This will be approached through Michael Mann's study

¹² Quirós Castillo, 'Las iglesias altomedievales'; Sánchez-Pardo 'Los contextos de fundación'; Lopez Quiroga and Bango Garcia, 'Los edificios de culto'.

¹³ Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*; Wood, *The Proprietary Church*; Innes, *State and Society*; Turner, *Making a Christian Landscape*; Morris, *Churches in the Landscape*; Zadora Rio, 'L'historiographie des paroisses'; Brogiolo and Chavarria Arnau, 'Chiese, territorio e dinamiche'; Chavarria Arnau, *Archeologia delle chiese*.

¹⁴ Sánchez-Pardo, 'Power and Rural Landscapes', pp. 160–65.

¹⁵ Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*; Brogiolo and Chavarria Arnau, *Aristocrazie e campagne*.



Map 7.2. Documentary and archaeological evidence for ecclesiastical foundations in Galicia between 711 and 910, and their relationship with episcopal sees and main Roman roads.
Map by the author using Demis WMS World Map.

of the sources of social power and Timothy Earle's application of this work to archaeological and anthropological contexts.¹⁶ This theoretical basis is complemented for the early medieval period by the work of Wendy Davies on patterns of power in another peripheral part of Europe,¹⁷ the recent discussion of operational scales for this period by Julio Escalona,¹⁸ and analysis of the articulation between local and central elites in the Middle Rhine Valley by Matthew Innes or, closer, in northern Iberia by Santiago Castellanos and Iñaki Martín Viso.¹⁹

This study is based on a comprehensive compilation of all the physical and documentary evidence for ecclesiastical buildings in Galicia during the eighth to early tenth centuries AD (Map 7.2). The specific features of this amount of data will not be detailed here and can be found in other works.²⁰ The focus is instead on analysing the better understood examples to address the aforementioned research issues. It is important to note that the date and veracity of many contemporary documents is problematic, as is the dating and interpretation of material remains. However, it is hoped that this approach will remain valid in the light of future research.

The Socio-Political Context of Churches in Early Medieval Galicia (AD 711–910): An Overview

Contrary to traditional assumptions, Galicia was a well-connected and mostly Christianized part of the Western Roman Empire by the time of its fall. Despite episodes of political instability, the region enjoyed a degree of social and economic dynamism during the fifth to early seventh centuries, first as the main part of the Suevic Kingdom (AD 411–585) and then as part of the Visigothic *Spania* (AD 585–711).²¹ However, the second half of seventh century saw a process of internal social, economic, and political fragmentation.²²

¹⁶ Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*; Earle, *How Chiefs Come to Power*; De Marrais, Castillo, and Earle, 'Ideology, Materialization'.

¹⁷ Davies, *Patterns of Power*.

¹⁸ Escalona Monge, 'The Early Middle Ages'.

¹⁹ Innes, *State and Society*; Castellanos and Martín Viso, 'The Local Articulation'.

²⁰ Sánchez-Pardo, 'Arqueología de las iglesias'; Sánchez-Pardo, 'Los contextos de fundación'; Yzquierdo Perrín, *Arte Medieval*; Núñez Rodríguez, *Arquitectura prerrománica*.

²¹ López Quiroga, *El final de la antigüedad*, pp. 291–93; Díaz Martínez, 'Extremis mundi partibus'.

²² Sánchez-Pardo, 'Power and Rural Landscapes', pp. 160–63.

By the year 711, when the Arab conquest of the Iberian Peninsula brought the Visigothic Kingdom to its end, Galicia was an isolated, politically fragmented, and overwhelmingly rural area, albeit one dense in rich natural resources.²³ The Muslim conquest had little impact on this region, and only its south-east area was occupied, by Berber troops, until approximately AD 750.²⁴ The main consequence of the Islamic conquest was to indirectly reinforce the autonomy of the local elites of this region, who based their power in land, family networks, and military force.²⁵

The gradual integration of Galicia in the Asturian Kingdom after AD 750 caused more significant social and political transformations, particularly during the ninth century. Contrary to the traditional, nationalist 'reconquest' model, it is now accepted that the development of the socio-political structure of the Asturian Kingdom should primarily be understood as a process of struggle and negotiation between local and supralocal power groups.²⁶ Although the new kingdom also expanded to the south and east, Galicia was a crucial territory within the larger polity due to its comparatively rich agriculture, deep Roman roots, and strong Church organization.²⁷ After an initial period of militarized integration under Kings Fruela and Silo between AD 760 and 790, King Alfonso II (AD 792–842) successfully negotiated with local Galician elites to the benefit of both sides, helping to articulate the central part of the region into the wider kingdom.²⁸ The southern part of Galicia was finally incorporated into the Asturian Kingdom during the reign of Alfonso III (866–910) through military actions led by native aristocracy (Map 7.3).

The new administrative structures of Galicia as part of the expansive Kingdom of Asturias were created through a process of territorial and political articulation (or rearticulation). This process has traditionally been called 'resettlement', but the concept is now decoupled from the old ideas of depopulation

²³ Baliñas Pérez, *Do mito á realidade*, pp. 59–73; Baliñas Pérez, 'De Covadonga a Compostela', pp. 368–71.

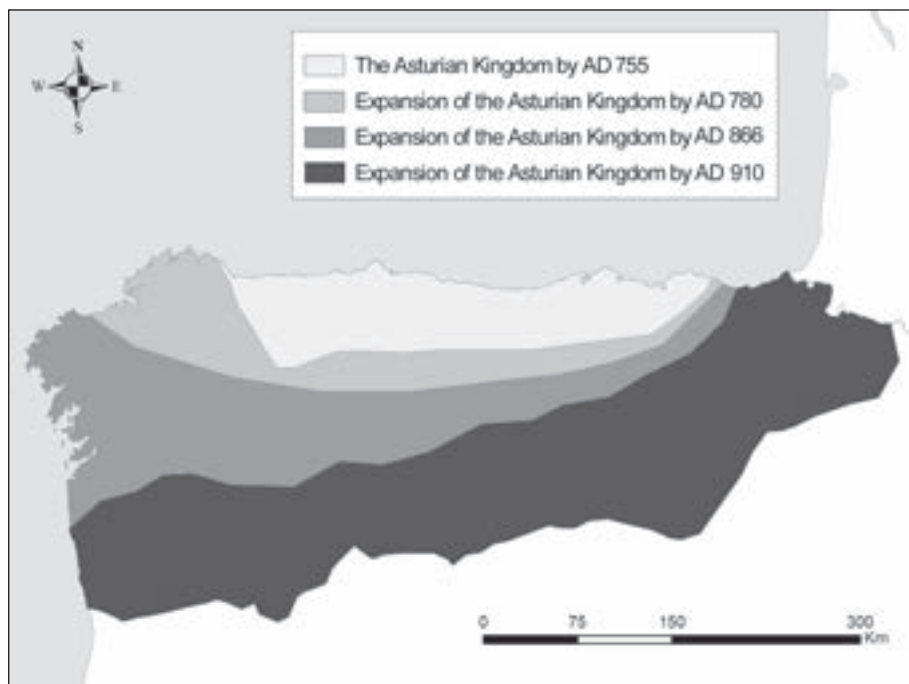
²⁴ Pallares Méndez and Portela Silva, 'Entre Toledo y Oviedo'.

²⁵ Portela Silva and Pallares Méndez, 'Elementos para el análisis'.

²⁶ Fernández Conde and others, 'Poderes sociales y políticos', pp. 23–27; Castellanos and Martín Viso, 'The Local Articulation', p. 29.

²⁷ Baliñas Pérez, 'De Covadonga a Compostela', p. 370; Portass, 'All Quiet on the Western Front?'

²⁸ Portass, 'All Quiet on the Western Front?'



Map 7.3. The expansion of the Asturian Kingdom in north-west Iberia during the eighth–tenth centuries. Map by the author.

and later repopulation after the Islamic conquest.²⁹ Instead, the crucial task is to calibrate the roles of the indigenous,³⁰ foreign,³¹ and local³² influences in the integration of Galicia into the Kingdom of Asturias, which comprised a marked ‘scale change’ in the complexity of the socio-political structures of early medieval north-west Iberia.³³

As we will try to demonstrate, churches are a useful element to approach this process of Galician-Asturian political articulation, which involved frequent episodes of the negotiation, struggle, resistance, and reaffirmation of the power of local and supralocal elites. The traditional view, based on surviving Asturian royal texts, holds that the Muslim invasion had led to the ruin of the few pre-exist-

²⁹ Pallares Méndez and Portela Silva, ‘Entre Toledo y Oviedo’.

³⁰ Barbero and Vigil, *La formación del feudalismo*.

³¹ García de Cortázar, *La organización social*.

³² Mínguez, ‘Continuidad y ruptura’.

³³ Portass, ‘All Quiet on the Western Front?’.

ing Galician churches, necessitating a significant programme of church building between the eighth and tenth centuries, headed by royal agents.³⁴ However, archaeological evidence increasingly shows a different and more complex picture.

It seems increasingly clear that the number and quality of churches in Galicia when the Arab conquest took place was higher than previously thought.³⁵ Archaeology has revealed that some churches documented as being founded in the ninth–tenth centuries are actually superimposed on earlier late Roman or Visigothic chapels. An example is the church of Santa María de Temes (Carballedo, Ourense) which has an inscription bearing a foundation date of AD 824. However, there are vestiges of a fourth-century Roman Christian mausoleum, which perhaps functioned as a chapel during the following centuries.³⁶ Another case is the monastery of Ferreira de Pallares (Guntín, Lugo), which has a documented foundation by Count Ero in 909,³⁷ but two seventh-century reliefs incorporated into its walls suggest the earlier existence of a Christian building.³⁸ As discussed below, in some cases this inconsistency between written and archaeological sources can be related to legitimisation strategies during the ‘resettlement’.

The picture of a relatively dense existing network of churches in place by c. 700, paralleled in neighbouring northern Portugal,³⁹ corresponds well with other areas of late antique Iberia and Western Mediterranean Europe.⁴⁰ However, this is not incompatible with the important and well-documented spate of new church foundations in Galicia during the eighth to tenth centuries, particularly during the second half of the ninth century, and there is good material and textual evidence that these documented examples are only the tip of an iceberg of small churches and monasteries founded in this period.

It is important to highlight the diversity of social elites founding and refounding these churches in Galicia between the eighth and tenth centuries. Sometimes they were created by relatively wealthy peasants, like the small family monastery of Santa Eulalia, founded in 856,⁴¹ which is known to us only

³⁴ Baliñas Pérez, *Do mito á realidade*, p. 532.

³⁵ Sánchez-Pardo, ‘Arqueología de las iglesias’.

³⁶ Delgado Gómez, ‘O conxunto paleocristián’; Yzquierdo Perrín, *Arte Medieval*, pp. 56, 66.

³⁷ Freire Camaniel, *El monacato gallego*, p. 722.

³⁸ Núñez Rodríguez, *Arquitectura prerrománica*, p. 190; Yzquierdo Perrín, *Arte Medieval*, pp. 63–64.

³⁹ See Luís Fontes’s contribution to this book.

⁴⁰ Brogiolo and Chavarria Arnau, *Aristocrazie e campagne*, pp. 127–50.

⁴¹ Sáez Sánchez and Sáez, *Colección diplomática*, doc. 2.

because its foundation charter was preserved by a major monastery.⁴² Other churches were promoted, directly or indirectly, by bishops, who were significant church proprietors in early medieval northern Iberia,⁴³ as reflected by the list of sixty-five churches belonging to the episcopal see of Iria c. 868.⁴⁴ Finally, churches were promoted by the new major elites linked to the Asturian Kingdom, as at SS Peter and Paul do Hermo in Triacastela, founded in the second half of the ninth century by the nobleman Gatón, who was in charge of the political reorganization of the area.⁴⁵

In the next pages, it will be discussed how these different social elites channelled power strategies by means of churches in eighth- and ninth-century Galicia.⁴⁶ For present purposes social power is divided into its economic, political, and ideological forms; military power is less relevant here.⁴⁷ This is an artificial distinction made for analytical reasons, and the real-world interrelatedness of these power strategies should be borne in mind.

Churches and the Strategies of Economic Power

Churches were important instruments for consolidating and enhancing economic power in the early Middle Ages. Although they are generally recognized as one of the main economic bases of aristocracies through the early medieval period in northern Spain,⁴⁸ as in other areas of Western Europe,⁴⁹ little attention has gone into exploring the specific strategies of economic power behind their foundation in this period. Following Michael Mann's conception of eco-

⁴² Kosto, 'Sicut mos esse solet'.

⁴³ Wood, *The Proprietary Church*, pp. 697–726.

⁴⁴ López Alsina, *La ciudad de Santiago*, p. 155.

⁴⁵ Freire Camaniel, *El monacato gallego*, p. 942.

⁴⁶ It is important to note that the power strategies embodied in churches did not necessarily encompass the full motivation for their founding. Spiritual, religious, and personal motivations also played an important role which must not be underestimated, although they are not easily recoverable.

⁴⁷ Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, p. 3; Earle, *How Chiefs Come to Power*.

⁴⁸ Loring García, 'Nobleza e iglesias propias'; García de Cortázar, 'Crecimiento económico', p. 34; Portela Silva and Pallares Méndez, 'Elementos para el análisis'.

⁴⁹ Wood, *The Proprietary Church*; Brogiolo and Chavarría Arnau, 'Chiese, territorio e dinamiche'; Davies, 'Economic Change'; Lebecq, 'The Role of the Monasteries'; Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*.

conomic power as the means of controlling the *praxis* circuits,⁵⁰ let us see how churches were part of strategies to control different levels of production, concentration, and distribution of material resources in this period.

Churches and Aristocratic Patrimonies

One of the main economic motivations for the early medieval aristocracy to found a proprietary church was to safeguard the family wealth by avoiding tax, evading episcopal interference,⁵¹ escaping military obligations, and concentrating wealth to prevent its fragmentation. Church foundation also legitimized family wealth by placing it in the realm of the sacred, which could be expedient when its origins were fraught or contested.⁵²

The distribution of small churches and monasteries in Galicia in the eighth and ninth centuries indicates the predominance of minor local elites across the territory. Specifically, monasteries can be interpreted as a survival strategy of these small local aristocracies in a complex period, something visible in surviving Galician charters, which can also act as indicators of their familiar patrimonies. In 787 three priests called Leodulfo, Froila, and Pascasio endowed a monastery situated by the river Boente (Melide, Lugo) near a village called *Palatio* (a place name likely to indicate an aristocratic estate) with significant wealth: the houses adjacent to the church, books, crosses, chalices, patens, veils, silverware, clothing, even the village of Palatio itself. They explicitly ordered that no layman could take anything from this endowment.⁵³ In 854, a priest named Gudesteo donated to the church of SS Román and Mamed his inherited family property: houses, a warehouse, apple trees and presses, and an array of ecclesiastical paraphernalia.⁵⁴ In both cases we see elites with property in the locality deciding to concentrate their wealth on a church.

The founding family usually kept control of their church endowment in different ways: through family influence, in the choice of the abbot, by the appointment of family members as priests or abbots, or even by the direct formation of the aristocratic family group into the monastic community

⁵⁰ Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, p. 25.

⁵¹ See Alexandra Chavarría's contribution to this volume.

⁵² Loring García, 'Nobleza e iglesias propias', p. 89; Díaz Martínez, 'Monasteries in a Peripheral Area', p. 351; Portela Silva and Pallares Méndez, 'Elementos para el análisis', p. 26.

⁵³ Loscertales de Garcia de Valdeavellano, *Tumbos del monasterio*, II, doc. 172.

⁵⁴ Lucas Álvarez, *El tumbo de San Julián*, doc. 99.

itself.⁵⁵ Moreover, the churches and their possessions were inherited through families, as with the abbot Adalino, who gave his church of San Julian de Friol (Lugo), which had been founded by his father in 870, to his grand-nephew.⁵⁶

Another important economic motive behind the foundation of churches and monasteries was their capacity to attract donations from the faithful. This practice was criticized at the end of seventh century by the monk Valerio of El Bierzo (León), who noted that rich landlords even forced their servants to become monks,⁵⁷ although Valerio himself admits to having been tempted by a lucrative position in an estate church when he was younger.⁵⁸

Ninth- and tenth-century charters provide more details about the different types of goods given to churches and monasteries in Galicia: houses, lands, other churches, servants, even towers. Often the donors became monks of the monastery concerned. The motivations behind such donations in tenth-century north-west Spain have been recently studied by Wendy Davies, who emphasizes the reciprocal benefits obtained by the donors, particularly access to social and political networks.⁵⁹ In this sense, as will be discussed later, donations were potent instruments of political power.

Donations could also entail problems to the ecclesiastical institution. Conflicts are frequently documented when monks decided to leave the monastery and wanted to recover their possessions. In order to prevent this, monasteries such as Santa Eulalia de Barreto brokered initial agreements covering this eventuality.⁶⁰ In other cases, monks are reported as 'illegally' selling monastic lands, ruining institutions.⁶¹ It is unsurprising that most of the documented disputes about property rights and taxes from early medieval Galicia concern churches.⁶²

We should also not forget the economic benefits of tithe collection and other incomes received by churches. However, evidence for tithes in early medieval north-west Spain is weak, and it is uncertain whether they were collected in a systematic way until the tenth century.⁶³

⁵⁵ Díaz Martínez, 'Monasteries in a Peripheral Area', pp. 347–50.

⁵⁶ Castro Correa, *Colección diplomática*, doc. 23.

⁵⁷ Frighetto, 'A nobreza illustre', p. 356.

⁵⁸ Valério do Bierzo, *Autobiografía*, p. 105.

⁵⁹ Davies, *Acts of Giving*, p. 32.

⁶⁰ Sáez Sánchez and Sáez, *Colección diplomática*, doc. 2.

⁶¹ López Alsina, *La ciudad de Santiago*, p. 169.

⁶² Portela Silva, 'Galicia y los reyes', p. 363.

⁶³ Wood, *The Proprietary Church*, p. 460; López Alsina, 'Parroquias y diócesis', p. 291.

Churches as Productive Centres

Ecclesiastical foundations were always provided with land and property and functioned in practice as agricultural centres.⁶⁴ In other European areas, as early as the eighth century, this led to further significant economic development of monasteries into centres of trade and manufacture with active roles in the emerging economy.⁶⁵ There is no evidence in early medieval Galicia for large commercial systems centred on churches or monasteries. Instead, there was a high density of small ecclesiastical centres across the territory, consistent with Galicia's geographical fragmentation and historically dispersed settlement pattern. This resulted in an unusually localized, but by no means weak, socio-economic structure.

Agriculture was the most important and widespread economic activity for these ecclesiastical centres, which is reflected in surviving charters. Visigothic law (which was in use in eighth- to tenth-century Galicia) dictated that any church should be endowed with the land seventy-two paces around the building (3.3 ha) and have at least ten servants to work it, as for example at St Cristobal de Lóuzara (Sarria, Lugo) around the year 800.⁶⁶ The prevalence of such documentary references explains why historians have mostly confined their attention to the agricultural estates of churches and monasteries in northern Spain, neglecting other forms of economic exploitation.

Some ecclesiastical centres were linked to riverine and coastal fishing. The ninth-century Galician charters often refer to river fisheries as part of the properties of small churches and monasteries, for example at the monastery of Santa Eulalia de Barreto (Ourense),⁶⁷ which lay near the river Miño. Sea fisheries are referred to less often, but we know that some were under royal control, such as that near A Lanzada (O Grove), which was donated to Santiago de Compostela by the king in 886.⁶⁸

Besides fishing, other activities like maritime trade can be proposed for the significant number of churches founded on the Galician coast, on the sites of late Roman coastal villas and factories, from the seventh century onwards. This is the case at San Xiao de Trebo, Santa Comba de Covas, San Saturniño de

⁶⁴ On this regard, see Juan Antonio Quirós and Igor Santos's contribution to this volume.

⁶⁵ Lebecq, 'The Role of the Monasteries'; Kelly, 'Trading Privileges'; Davies, 'Economic Change'.

⁶⁶ López Alsina, 'Millas *in giro*', p. 177.

⁶⁷ Sáez Sánchez and Sáez, *Colección diplomática*, doc. 2.

⁶⁸ López Ferreiro, *Historia de la Santa A. M. Iglesia de Santiago*, doc. 4231.

Goiáns, San Vicente de Meá, Adro Vello, San Xiao-Pipín, and Vigo.⁶⁹ Although archaeological evidence suggests that late antique long-distance trade ceased during the first half of the seventh century in Galicia, it is possible that commercial maritime exchange with Atlantic Europe continued in the following centuries. It remains probable that ecclesiastical centres were engaged in this,⁷⁰ as is known for other areas of contemporary Europe.⁷¹

Returning inland, documentary references to ecclesiastical mills, apple presses, and wine production can indicate a scale of production beyond self-sufficiency, directed to local or regional markets.⁷² This is compatible with the picture of many small ecclesiastical centres scattered throughout Galicia, since (as discussed below) they can function collectively as a 'federation' of religious houses, or may be concentrated in the hands of a more powerful ecclesiastical centre which could aggregate and diversify their production. This was the strategy of the Bishop of Iria, who by the mid-ninth century held many churches located in very different areas: by the coast, in fertile valleys, by rivers, in vineyard areas, and so forth.⁷³ Major powers may also have promoted mining, given the association between some episcopal churches and rich mining areas, such as at Aranton and Brion (A Coruña),⁷⁴ and salt production, as in the area of A Lanzada (O Grove).⁷⁵

Some of the churches founded between the eighth and tenth centuries in Galicia clearly articulate with navigable rivers and major Roman roads, which were kept in use during the early medieval period.⁷⁶ It is interesting to note that these were all major, wealthy churches, rather than small foundations. This must have been part of a deliberate strategy on the part of their founders to pursue both economic development and connectivity through major routes of regional communication.

To conclude, ecclesiastical centres in early medieval Galicia were not merely the result of wealth production, but active agents in the production and channelling of economic resources in this non-urban society.

⁶⁹ Sánchez-Pardo, 'Los contextos de fundación'.

⁷⁰ Fernández Fernández, 'As relacións externas'.

⁷¹ Kelly, 'Trading Privileges'; Lebecq, 'The Role of the Monasteries'.

⁷² López Alsina, *La ciudad de Santiago*, p. 236.

⁷³ López Alsina, *La ciudad de Santiago*, p. 161.

⁷⁴ López Alsina, *La ciudad de Santiago*, p. 161.

⁷⁵ López Ferreiro, *Historia de la Santa A. M. Iglesia de Santiago*, doc. 4231.

⁷⁶ López Alsina, 'De Asseconia'.

Churches in a Changing Landscape

Study of palaeoenvironmental evidence has revealed an intense phase of deforestation and increased exploitation of cereals, grapevines, and chestnuts, amongst other crops, between the seventh and tenth centuries in north-west Iberia.⁷⁷ This is consistent with the chronologies obtained by archaeological studies on early medieval agrarian spaces in Galicia,⁷⁸ and can be related to material, textual, and toponymic evidence for the creation of new settlements in this period.⁷⁹ These landscape transformations are also coherent with trends observed throughout Europe,⁸⁰ which are probably indicative of the need to increase agricultural surplus to support increasing socio-political stratification.⁸¹ There is evidence to think that ecclesiastical centres, particularly small churches and monasteries, acted as catalysts for many of these changes in land use and the exploitation of new areas.⁸²

Firstly, most of the small churches and monasteries documented in this period were placed in valleys and near rivers, in the most fertile areas, which indicates the close relationship between churches and agricultural wealth. However, unlike other areas of northern Spain such as the Basque Country,⁸³ churches and monasteries of this period do not seem to have been placed in the middle of settlements, but in more isolated locations. Nearly two thirds of churches and monasteries known in Galicia between AD 711 and 910, from both physical and documentary evidence, stood outside of settlements, with an average distance between churches and settlements of 210 metres. Taking into account the generally limited changes to settlement plans in the early Middle Ages in Galicia,⁸⁴ this fact indicates that these religious houses were likely placed in the heart of agrarian spaces, in the peripheral areas of their settlements.

⁷⁷ Martínez-Cortizas and others, 'Linking Changes', p. 703; Tornqvist and others, 'Degradación antropogénica'; Ariño and others, *El pasado presente*, pp. 187–92.

⁷⁸ Ballesteros Arias, 'La Arqueología Rural'.

⁷⁹ Sánchez-Pardo, 'Power and Rural Landscapes', pp. 143–46.

⁸⁰ Ariño Gil and others, *El pasado presente*, pp. 187–92; Rippon, 'Landscape Change'; Turner, *Making a Christian Landscape*, pp. 72–79.

⁸¹ Hamerow, *Early Medieval Settlements*, pp. 100–106; García de Cortázar, 'Crecimiento económico'.

⁸² Carzolio de Rossi, 'Participación monástica'. See also Duncan W. Wright's contribution to this volume.

⁸³ Quirós Castillo, 'Las iglesias altomedievales'.

⁸⁴ Sánchez-Pardo, 'Poblamiento rural', pp. 297–99.

Secondly, toponymic and documentary evidence suggest that churches were often founded at the centres of rural estates. Some of these agrarian estates had toponymic bynames referring to their lord; for example in 871 the priest Belisarius made a donation to his monastery in Belesar (Vilalba, Lugo).⁸⁵ Often the church founder was reputedly the first person to have cleared the forest and cultivated those lands, as at the aforementioned monastery of Barreto, founded by Abbot Senior at the beginning of the ninth century.⁸⁶ Charters record that Senior and his incipient monastic community cleared the land, planted vines, and constructed many houses. This 'colonization' of new lands corresponds with the landscape changes indicated by palaeoenvironmental evidence, mentioned above.

Finally, another piece of evidence of small Galician monasteries as active agents of the agrarian expansion during the early medieval period was their capacity for collaborative cooperation by means of 'federations' of religious houses. Satellite foundations gradually emerged from a 'mother monastery', helping to control new areas. This is the case of the already mentioned Barreto monastery, which controlled a group of dependant churches along the central part of the river Miño. This structure contributed to the creation of a dynamic socio-economic system at the local scale that should not be underestimated and was probably another step in the agricultural intensification of this period.

Churches and the Strategies of Political Power

Early medieval churches and monasteries were often active in political power strategies. They had a high capacity for articulating political relationships at multiple scales, as has been discussed across early medieval Europe.⁸⁷ This capacity was specially demanded in a changing social scenario like Galicia during the 'resettlement'.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Castro Correa, *Colección diplomática*, doc. 10.

⁸⁶ Sáez Sánchez and Sáez, *Colección diplomática*, doc. 2.

⁸⁷ Wood, *The Proprietary Church*; La Rocca, 'Le élites, chiese e sepulture'; Davies, *Acts of Giving*; Le Jan, 'Convents, Violence'; Smith, 'Aedificatio Sancti Locī'; Loring García, 'Nobleza e iglesias propias'.

⁸⁸ Baliñas Pérez, *Do mito á realidade*, pp. 528–65; Carzolio de Rossi, 'Participación monástica'.

Churches and the Creation of Local Networks of Political Power

As said, written and archaeological evidence suggests that until the early tenth century most churches in Galicia were founded by local lords at the core of their small- to medium-sized properties. This appears to reflect a relatively homogeneous society with little evidence for marked hierarchy, characterized by the localization of political power and a predominance of privately held estates.⁸⁹ This was accompanied by socio-political instability as lords competed to secure estates and centres of political power, including through the foundation of churches and monasteries, particularly in a time when a lord's social position was still not cemented by his lineage.⁹⁰

Only from the beginning of the tenth century did a few major ecclesiastical centres founded by major aristocracies start to be able to accumulate and control a larger number of properties distributed throughout Galicia, although most of the foundations remained small churches created by local elites. From the early tenth century also, in the context of increasing feudalization, some major aristocrats became 'protectors' of monasteries, receiving in return the right to collect fines.⁹¹ However, it must be noted that the social power of many of the major aristocratic families of late tenth- and eleventh-century Galicia originated in their foundation of small churches and monasteries in the eighth and ninth centuries.

Networks of political power were first established within ecclesiastical or monastic communities along a similar process that took place in village communities, as powerful individuals gained control over local social and economic life.⁹² In fact, as already mentioned, some monasteries were actually aristocratic rural estates directly converted into religious houses, including servants who became monks. In this 'micro-cosmos' there is a constant concern about the new monks, who had to be accepted by the abbot and the community, which suggests that a close control was kept over the internal power balance of the house.

In parallel to these internal power dynamics, churches promoted new socio-political relationships at local scale. The main instrument to channel this were the donations, as lands and houses given in 860 by Helaguntia, Baroncello,

⁸⁹ Andrade Cernadas, 'Las villae en la Galicia'.

⁹⁰ Portela Silva and Pallares Méndez, 'Elementos para el análisis', p. 26; Andrade Cernadas, 'Los modelos monásticos', p. 598.

⁹¹ Isla Frez, *La sociedad gallega*, p. 124; Loring García, 'Nobleza e iglesias propias', p. 97.

⁹² Isla Frez, *La sociedad gallega*, p. 112.

and Visflavara to the church of San Julian and San Vicente in Ponteceso (A Coruña).⁹³ As shown by Wendy Davies, donations to local churches enabled interaction between different social groups, since they often implied some kind of 'return' to the donors, particularly access to social and political networks.⁹⁴ This did not strongly increase the 'seigniorialization' of north-western Spanish society in this period, since a relatively low proportion of 'peasant' donations (around 25%) is observed before the eleventh century.⁹⁵ In fact, sometimes the donations to a religious house by a landowner included redistribution of wealth at the local scale in the form of charity for the poor.⁹⁶ Thus, donations, and their expected 'returns', were mainly used in the eighth to tenth centuries as a principal means of articulating socio-political links between communities, lords, and major aristocracies.

It has already been emphasized that the control of a church remained, as far as possible, in the hands of the founder family. After the aforementioned abbot Senior of Barreto died, for example, he was succeeded by his nephew, and subsequently by his nephew's brother. However, it was sometimes possible for external powers to take control of a church, especially after a period of economic crisis. This was usually instigated by a substantial donation, which was often considered a *de facto* refoundation that in practice made the donor the new owner of the monastery.

Churches and the Dialectics between Old and New Political Power during the Resettlement

As discussed above, current historiography no longer considers the 'resettlement' of north-west Spain to have been the colonization of empty land and ruins, but the creation of new political and administrative frames over existing local structures during the incorporation of this territory into the Asturian Kingdom.⁹⁷ The version derived from royal documents is that kings controlled the 'resettlement': they distributed lands, founded and restored churches, and created new administrative structures. A contrary picture is found in other

⁹³ Loscertales de García de Valdeavellano, *Tumbos del monasterio*, I, doc. 124.

⁹⁴ Davies, *Acts of Giving*, p. 32.

⁹⁵ Davies, *Acts of Giving*, p. 217.

⁹⁶ García de Cortázar, 'Crecimiento económico', p. 38.

⁹⁷ Baliñas, 'De Covadonga a Compostela'; García de Cortázar, *La organización social*; Portela Silva, 'Galicia y los reyes'.

kinds of documents, which reveal the importance of aristocratic initiative and especially show the leading role of semi-independent lords and their groups of followers.⁹⁸ It will be shown here how churches and monasteries were the principal vehicles for the political articulation of new power relations between pre-existing elites and the new aristocracies.⁹⁹

It is clear from the distribution and architectural-chronological features of churches known for the period AD 711–910 that many foundations and refoundations followed the several ‘stages’ of the ‘resettlement’ of Galicia. Broadly, four phases and corresponding geographical areas can be distinguished during this process. The first area is south of the city of Lugo, which seems to have experienced the first ‘wave’ of church foundations linked with the initial consolidation of the Asturian Kingdom over Galicia around the mid- to late eighth century. Surviving ecclesiastical architecture of this date presents strong continuities with Hispanic Visigothic practice, as San Estevo of Calvor (Sarria).¹⁰⁰ The second ‘wave’ of churches concentrated from c. AD 800 in the northern and north-western coast of Galicia, around Lugo and A Coruña, and were especially associated with the Roman road network, as the case of Santa Eulalia da Espenuca (Coirós).¹⁰¹ The third area comprised the south of the current province of Lugo and the surrounds of the city of Ourense (south-east Galicia) around the middle of the ninth century, with probably richer buildings, as the case of San Xoán do Cachón (Nogueira de Ramuín).¹⁰² Finally, between the later ninth century and the first decades of the tenth, the focus of church foundation associated with the ‘resettlement’ moved to the south of the province of Ourense, in the southern part of Galicia, and shows more elaborated examples, already linked with the so-called ‘Mozarabic’ art, like Santa Maria de Mixós (Verín).¹⁰³

Thus, it is clear that churches were key elements of the ‘resettlement’ of a specific area. Sometimes, they were used to articulate negotiations between local elites and agents of the Asturian Kingdom. The small monastery of San Vicente de Vilouchada was used as just such an intermediary: in 818 an Asturian count

⁹⁸ Baliñas Pérez, *Do mito á realidade*, p. 101.

⁹⁹ D’Emilio, ‘The Legend of Bishop Odoario’; Carzolio de Rossi, ‘Participación monástica.’

¹⁰⁰ Yzquierdo Perrín, *Arte Medieval*, p. 73; Núñez Rodríguez, *Arquitectura prerrománica*, pp. 105, 126.

¹⁰¹ Díaz y Díaz, ‘La Diócesis de Iria’, p. 37.

¹⁰² Yzquierdo Perrín, *Arte Medieval*, p. 149.

¹⁰³ Núñez Rodríguez, *Arquitectura prerrománica*, pp. 201–11; Yzquierdo Perrín, *Arte Medieval*, pp. 140–44.

gave to this monastery certain goods offered to him by local landowners in return for a favourable judicial sentence.¹⁰⁴ A similar 'intermediary' role, but at a bigger scale, has been identified at other European monasteries in border areas, such as Redon (Brittany), which lay between Breton and Carolingian powers by the mid-ninth century.¹⁰⁵

In other cases, churches were also used as adaptive strategies by the new powers who had arrived into Galicia, primarily from southern Spain (the Mozarabs), between the eighth and ninth centuries.¹⁰⁶ These new arrivals left their mark in place names such as Toldaos (people who came from Toledo) and Foramontaos (perhaps those from the Cantabrian area). A close association between the first mention of these places and church foundations in the eighth to tenth centuries is visible in some documents. The church of Santiago de Toldaos (Láncara, Lugo), for example, was founded in 849 by a cleric named Andres, who endowed it with an inheritance, received from his parents, at 'Villa Toldanos'.¹⁰⁷ It is possible that Andres was a descendant of migrants from Toledo who had taken lands in this area of Láncara, and he attempted to consolidate these properties in perpetuity with the foundation of a church. A similar case is the church of San Xiao de Cumbraos (Sobrado), first mentioned in a document of 883, in a territory called 'Presuras'.¹⁰⁸ The name 'Cumbraos' refers to people arrived from Coimbra (Portugal) while 'Presuras' indicates the process of land acquisition during the resettlement of the eighth and ninth centuries. The extent of integration of these new settlers into Galician society is uncertain, but conflict with existing communities over landownership is likely to have occurred. In all cases, the establishment of churches and monasteries was a common feature for the new settlers and a key instrument for the creation of local power networks, as discussed above.

Major Ecclesiastical Centres and Regional Power Dynamics

Major churches and monasteries also played a main role in articulating power relations between the monarchy and the aristocracy. One of the earliest examples is the donation of King Silo of Asturias (774–83) to the monastery of

¹⁰⁴ Portela Silva, 'El rey y los obispos', pp. 219–20.

¹⁰⁵ Smith, '*Aedificatio Sancti Locī*', pp. 363–67.

¹⁰⁶ Balañas Pérez, *Do mito á realidade*, pp. 160–94. See also Christofer Zwanzig's contribution to this volume.

¹⁰⁷ Lucas Álvarez, *El tumbo de San Julián*, doc. 128.

¹⁰⁸ Loscertales de García de Valdeavellano, *Tumbos del monasterio*, I, doc. 73.

Esperaután in 775. Silo donated property in eastern Galicia for the foundation of a monastery to a group of local men, led by an abbot named Esperaután whom he trusted, in return for their loyalty.¹⁰⁹ Churches were also important in managing conflict. When King Alfonso III wanted to punish two rebel noblemen, named Florencio and Aldoreto Tritoniz, he confiscated their church of San Julian de Mos, which they had received from their great-grandparents.¹¹⁰ This shows how important the possession of a church was for the stability of the Galician aristocracy of the time.

Major churches could be used by the Asturian kings as islands of power in and bastions of their presence in hostile territories. The monastery of Samos, of seventh-century or earlier date, from the mid-eighth century had become an instrument of royal power in the context of the Galician 'resettlement'.¹¹¹ It is not clear why this monastery was chosen as a power centre by the Asturian kings, perhaps because of its strategic position at the mountain pass from Asturias to Galicia.¹¹² In any case, the support of King Froila completely changed the scales of power of the monastery. This king gave several churches in different parts of Galicia which provided bigger economic incomes to this monastery as well greater political influence in those areas.¹¹³

The second major focus of the Asturian monarchy in Galicia is the church of Santiago de Compostela, founded c. 825–30 in the place where the supposed remains of the apostle James had been discovered. The political and ecclesiastical aspects of foundation are well known:¹¹⁴ the independence of the Asturian Church from the Visigothic church of Toledo, the unification of the new kingdom under a single new saintly protector against Muslims, and the formation of closer links to Carolingian power. But the spatial strategy behind this foundation is often neglected. Santiago lies at an important road junction,¹¹⁵ close to the 'expansion limit' of the Kingdom of Asturias at the beginning of the ninth century, and became a centre for territorial gains during the years that

¹⁰⁹ Floriano Cumbreño, *Diplomática española*, doc. 9.

¹¹⁰ García Conde, 'Diploma de D. Alfonso'.

¹¹¹ Baliñas Pérez, *Do mito á realidade*, p. 82.

¹¹² On the importance of Samos for the elites of the Asturian Kingdom, see Christofer Zwanzig's contribution to this volume.

¹¹³ López Alsina, 'Millas *in giro*'.

¹¹⁴ López Alsina, *La ciudad de Santiago*, pp. 107–28; Díaz y Díaz, 'La Diócesis de Iria-Compostela', pp. 18–21; Baliñas Pérez, 'De Covadonga a Compostela', p. 338.

¹¹⁵ López Alsina, 'De Asseconia'.

followed. Moreover, it was a good place to institute a pilgrimage through the north of Spain, serving the internal and external reinforcement of the new kingdom. Royal support of this new foundation is clear from the beginning: in 834 Alfonso II granted it the land in a three mile radius around the church, which is considerable compared to the usual seventy-two paces endowment around a church. Successive kings increased its endowment, sometimes taken from rebel nobles.¹¹⁶

In both cases, as in other examples of churches and monasteries promoted by the Asturian kings in Galicia, such as Santa María de Cebreiro and perhaps San Xes de Francelos (given its similarity to Asturian royal architectural patterns), proximity to major roads was crucial. The importance of the strategic placement of royal monasteries is visible across Europe at this time.¹¹⁷

In the case of both Samos and Santiago, the king did not directly control the monastery but asserted his power in collaboration with the local bishop. The relationship between kings and bishops was reinforced in the context of the expansion of the new Asturian Kingdom, to their mutual benefit.¹¹⁸ The foundation of churches again played an important role in this, and many documents made by the royal court gave the possession of churches to the existing local bishops and major abbots of Galicia. In return, episcopal support was crucial to the king in order to mediate political relationships with local elites. Bishops interacted with local lords particularly through their role consecrating churches. In 854 the aforementioned priest Gudesteo donated his property to the church of San Román and San Mamed, which he had built 'with his own hands', and put it under the jurisdiction of the abbot-bishop of Samos, Fatal.¹¹⁹ Bishops therefore appear to have effectively controlled the access of local founders to higher levels of supralocal power in the Asturian Kingdom.

As we have seen, bishops were the main intermediaries between local and supralocal powers. The power of the bishops of early medieval north-western Spain was based on their personal and family property rather than the patrimony of their see,¹²⁰ and again churches were often the most important part of this property. In 867 the will of Bishop Rudesindo of Mondoñedo, for example, concentrated significant family wealth (houses, granaries, mills, orchards, vine-

¹¹⁶ López Alsina, *La ciudad de Santiago*, pp. 128–37.

¹¹⁷ Wood, *The Proprietary Church*, p. 270.

¹¹⁸ Isla Frez, *La sociedad gallega*, p. 93.

¹¹⁹ Lucas Álvarez, *El tumbo de San Julián*, doc. 99.

¹²⁰ Isla Frez, *La sociedad gallega*, pp. 95–98; Portela Silva, 'El rey y los obispos', p. 222.

yards, farmland, cattle, and household furniture) in a donation to the church of SS Vincent and John in Almerezo.¹²¹ But bishops were able to increase their patrimony through their participation in local power dynamics, for example when consecrating the churches of local elites. Bishops received payments, such as a share in church rents, and in return local elites gained access to new socio-political relationships.

Churches and the Strategies of Ideological Power

Ecclesiastical foundations are particularly suited for channelling ideological power strategies, and ideological power needs material form to be effective.¹²² In that regard, early medieval churches not only embodied aspects of political power, social prestige, and economic wealth, but were also a potent reflection of Christianity, which is a religion well able to justify power, dominance, and social inequality.¹²³ In addition, churches can convey aspects of ideological power either through their architecture,¹²⁴ or through the creation of memories, stories, and traditions.¹²⁵

Churches and Social Legitimization

Proprietary churches can be interpreted in terms of both social control and the legitimization of social status.¹²⁶ As has been shown in northern Italy, private foundations with dedicated burial spaces helped to reaffirm aristocratic family identities, sending messages to 'peer elites'.¹²⁷ In Galicia, there were at least two main ways to channel and materialize ideological legitimation through early medieval churches: through their location and their architecture.

¹²¹ Portela Silva, 'El rey y los obispos', p. 222.

¹²² De Marrais, Castillo, and Earle, 'Ideology, Materialization'.

¹²³ Cleve, 'The Triumph of Christianity'; Earle, *How Chiefs Come to Power*, p. 9; Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, p. 309.

¹²⁴ Ó Carragáin, *Churches in Early Medieval Ireland*.

¹²⁵ Smith, 'Aedificatio Sancti Loci', Le Jan, 'Convents, Violence'.

¹²⁶ Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, pp. 385, 452; Turner, *Making a Christian Landscape*, pp. 153–55; Le Jan, 'Convents, Violence', p. 268.

¹²⁷ Brogiolo and Chavarría Arnau, 'Chiese, territorio e dinamiche', pp. 17–19; La Rocca, 'Le élites, chiese e sepolture'.

Firstly, the location of churches was a message of prestige in their communities. The frequent isolation of early medieval churches and monasteries in Galicia from settlements (as noted earlier) sharpened this ideological separation. In other parts of Europe such as England, both private and monastic churches were built in prominent places to demonstrate authority or ownership over a territory.¹²⁸ This may explain the several early medieval churches in Galicia located at Iron Age hillforts like Calvor,¹²⁹ Seteventos,¹³⁰ Sumoas,¹³¹ or Vilouchada.¹³² But also the spatial internal division inside churches and monasteries (with internal areas only accessible to monks) established a distance with the rest of the local inhabitants which reinforced the ideological and social supremacy of the ecclesiastical institution, particularly when the monks in question were also local aristocrats.¹³³

Secondly, the architecture and the extent of investment in the fabric of a church building was another potent message of the prestige of its founder. This is particularly apparent when a church was constructed involving craftsmen, techniques, and materials beyond its local context.¹³⁴ Most local churches in Galicia built during the eighth to tenth centuries involved mainly local resources. They were small, single nave buildings, made of masonry or timber, with a simple timber or tile roof and a small squared apse. In general, construction techniques retained the Visigothic architectural style until the end of the ninth century.¹³⁵ However, with the empowerment of some aristocracies, this began to change. From the second half of the ninth century, some elites were able to attract more experienced stonemasons and import techniques from more distant places. For example, as discussed above, it is clear that 'resettlement' churches built in Ourense from the end of the ninth century had more elaborate architecture than earlier examples in Lugo and western Galicia.¹³⁶ This indicates that found-

¹²⁸ Pestell, *Landscapes of Monastic Foundation*, p. 54.

¹²⁹ Yzquierdo Perrín, *Arte Medieval*, p. 73; Núñez Rodríguez, *Arquitectura prerrománica*, pp. 105, 126.

¹³⁰ Yzquierdo Perrín, *Arte Medieval*, p. 108; Núñez Rodríguez, *Arquitectura prerrománica*, p. 126.

¹³¹ González Paz, 'El Diácono Rodrigo'.

¹³² Portela Silva, 'El rey y los obispos', pp. 219–20.

¹³³ Hansson, 'The Medieval Aristocracy', pp. 442–44.

¹³⁴ See Gian Pietro Brogiolo's contribution to this volume.

¹³⁵ Yzquierdo Perrín, *Arte Medieval*, pp. 72–75; Núñez Rodríguez, *Arquitectura prerrománica*, pp. 117–18; D'Emilio, 'The Legend of Bishop Odoario', p. 75.

¹³⁶ Rivas Fernández, 'Algunas consideraciones', p. 101.



Figure 7.1.
Church of San Xes de
Francelos, Ribadavia.
Source: Wikimedia.

ers in Ourense were engaged in greater networks which provided them richer means for social display than founders in Lugo a century earlier. Specifically, churches of Ourense shared many elements of the architectural programme linked to the ideological legitimation of the Kingdom of Asturias, the so-called ‘Asturian style’.¹³⁷ One of the most interesting cases is San Xes de Francelos (Ribadavia, Ourense), a ninth-century church with architectural elements of extraordinary quality (Figure 7.1).¹³⁸ The builder clearly had a good knowledge of Roman and Visigothic styles, which he used to convey the Visigothic monarchy and church, which he fused with Carolingian influences and local traditions.¹³⁹ Other well-known cases are the church of Santa Maria do Cebreiro, a fine late ninth-century example of Asturian art promoted by the king at the main entrance to Galicia through the León mountains. This was a key strategic position so the church helped to manifest the ideological presence of the king to all the passers-by.¹⁴⁰ However, this was not a linear message to the whole society, but the way the audience experienced and understood the architectural and spatial setting of churches varied depending on their social level.

¹³⁷ Fernández Conde and others, ‘Poderes sociales y políticos’, pp. 28–30.

¹³⁸ Rodríguez Resino and Seara Carballo, *San Xés de Francelos*.

¹³⁹ Rivas Fernández, ‘Algunas consideraciones’, p. 63; Núñez Rodríguez, *Arquitectura prerrománica*, pp. 170–78.

¹⁴⁰ Yzquierdo Perrín, *Arte Medieval*, pp. 96–98.

Churches, Legitimization, and the Use of the Past

Appropriation of the past was an important source of legitimization in the early Middle Ages.¹⁴¹ Churches, an important material expression of social power in this period, were often associated with this in early medieval Galicia. Let us explore two different strategies of ideological power based on the use of the past in churches.

Firstly, the claims over allegedly empty spaces. As noted above, ninth- and tenth-century Galician documents, especially those socially closer to the royal realm, often intentionally ignore information about the previous occupation of the place where a new church had been built, even emphasizing the novelty of the foundation. Archaeology increasingly offers a different picture. As said, late Roman and/or Visigothic levels potentially indicative of early churches have been identified beneath churches with documented foundation dates in the eighth to tenth centuries,¹⁴² like the cases of San Martiño de Pazó,¹⁴³ San Vicente (Nogueira de Ramuín, Ourense),¹⁴⁴ and Santa Comba de Bande.¹⁴⁵

It seems likely that this contradiction reflects the same rhetoric of 'deserted places' (*eremi*) visible in documents referring to settlements. Texts use the term 'settle' (*popolare*) even if this does not mean that the place was empty.¹⁴⁶ So we can think that the concept of church 'foundation' does not necessarily refer to a new church structure but to the granting of the goods necessary to the daily life of an ecclesiastical institution. This explains why the supposed 'foundation' of a church often corresponds simply to the restoration of an earlier church. This negation of previous owners can be interpreted as an ideological strategy to justify the appropriation of a place, especially by newly arrived lords.¹⁴⁷

The most common legitimization strategy based on the past in the early Middle Ages is the reuse of archaeological spaces and ancient materials (*spolia*)

¹⁴¹ Bradley, *Altering the Earth*, p. 127; Effros 'Monuments and Memory'; Eaton, *Plundering*.

¹⁴² Rivas Fernández, 'Algunas consideraciones', p. 69.

¹⁴³ Núñez Rodríguez, *Arquitectura prerrománica*, pp. 237–51; Yzquierdo Perrín, *Arte Medieval*, pp. 121–23; Utrero Agudo, *Iglesias tardoantiguas*, p. 588.

¹⁴⁴ Yzquierdo Perrín, *Arte Medieval*, p. 57.

¹⁴⁵ Yzquierdo Perrín, *Arte Medieval*, pp. 44–52; Utrero Agudo, *Iglesias tardoantiguas*, p. 584.

¹⁴⁶ Portela Silva, 'Galicia y los reyes'.

¹⁴⁷ See Christofer Zwanzig's contribution to this volume on the foundations 'in eremo' and the negation of the previous occupation of the place.

in churches. Debate over this phenomenon falls into two main camps:¹⁴⁸ that *spolia* was a conscious reuse of the past in order to appropriate its prestige and legitimacy,¹⁴⁹ or that the reuse of building materials was pragmatic and such materials were controlled by the authorities anyway.¹⁵⁰ It will be argued here that both of these models are complementary.

In many instances when a new church is placed on the ruins of a Roman 'villa', as at Santiago de Proendos, Santiago de Ois, and Santa Comba de Louro, the founder may have profited both from the available building material and from the symbolic capital of a place whose visible ruins evoked an ancient place of power. In other cases, the church may be built over other types of Roman structure, such as the small seventh-century church of Cidadela (Sobrado, A Coruña), which was built over a Roman camp.¹⁵¹ The founders of this church obviously chose this place deliberately, because the structures and walls of this important Roman camp would have been clearly visible at this time. The construction of the church would have been expedited by the available building materials, whilst there is good evidence for selective reuse since some Roman walls were completely destroyed. It is also clear that a memory of the previous importance and function of this place persisted, since the church was placed over the highest status building of the camp, the 'principia', which is analogous with the seventh-century Anglo-Saxon churches of All Saints, Ilkley (Yorkshire),¹⁵² York Minster,¹⁵³ and St Paul in the Bail (Lincoln).¹⁵⁴ Moreover, locating the church within the Roman camp would have taken advantage of its strategic location and links with the major Roman roads of Galicia. Finally, in other cases churches are founded over ancient sacred sites. A significant example is the Ascension church in Armeá, Ourense, built on an ancient Iron Age thermal structure associated with a water cult.

The reuse of the pre-Roman, Roman, and Visigothic past gave Galician church builders of the eighth to tenth centuries greater legitimacy and a strong association with local places of power. Change is more readily accepted when

¹⁴⁸ Ward Perkins, 'Re-using the Architectural', pp. 225–32.

¹⁴⁹ Bradley *Altering the Earth*, pp. 114–29; Effros, 'Monuments and Memory'.

¹⁵⁰ Chavarría Arnau, *Archeologia delle chiese*, p. 108.

¹⁵¹ Costa García and Varela Gómez, 'A Cidadela después'.

¹⁵² Eaton, *Plundering the Past*, pp. 128–29.

¹⁵³ Norton, 'The Anglo-Saxon Cathedral'.

¹⁵⁴ Green, *Britons and Anglo-Saxons*, pp. 65–69.

clad in the familiar guise of an existing authority,¹⁵⁵ a strategy which was particularly important in this period for groups of 'settlers' from other areas. Additionally, most of the examples discussed above were well connected with major Roman roads. Thus, the Roman past was important to these settlers both through its symbolic power and due to its ability to create territorial articulation. Of course, we must distinguish between intentions and the way audiences actually read this reuse of the past. Additionally, it is important to note that there is greater evidence for the material reuse of the past in Galicia than in the core of the Asturian Kingdom.¹⁵⁶ This may imply that there was more need of it in the new integrated territories than in the heart of the kingdom.

The two ideological strategies discussed here — the foundation of churches in 'deserted places' or in places with powerful existing significance — becomes most complex in the case of the most important Galician church of the period, Santiago de Compostela. It was founded *c.* AD 825–30 over the remains of a Roman mausoleum which allegedly held the remains of St James. As said, this topic has been extensively studied from the perspectives of politics and ecclesiastical history, but interesting issues regarding the archaeological and spatial implications of the place selected for this church have been scarcely explored. Contrary to the idea of an abandoned and remote place (a deep forest) for the tomb of St James found in ninth-century accounts, archaeology has proved the existence beneath the church of Santiago of a Roman and late antique necropolis associated with an adjacent settlement,¹⁵⁷ with a pre-existing church (San Felix de Solobio).¹⁵⁸ So, again, we are facing the ideological strategy of the 'deserted place', which in this case helped to lend realism and consistency to the miraculous 'discovery' of the tomb of St James by Bishop Teodomiro (Figure 7.2).¹⁵⁹ Moreover, agents of the episcopal see of Iria prepared in the tenth century a historical elaboration in order to give consistency to the archaeological finding.¹⁶⁰ In this sense, the promoters of this church showed a degree of historical and archaeological knowledge, since they were able to identify a Roman

¹⁵⁵ Bradley, *Altering the Earth*, p. 115.

¹⁵⁶ Wickham, 'Asturias entre visigodos', p. 477.

¹⁵⁷ Suárez Otero, 'En los orígenes'.

¹⁵⁸ López Alsina, 'Parroquias y diócesis', pp. 268–73.

¹⁵⁹ See the contribution to this volume on Aachen by Andreas Schaub and Tanja Kohlberger-Schaub. Archaeology has demonstrated that the Carolingian church was founded in an inhabited place, contrary to what written sources tell us.

¹⁶⁰ Díaz y Díaz, 'La Diócesis de Iria-Compostela', p. 23.



Figure 7.2. Tombstone of Bishop Teodomiro (d. 847), alleged discoverer of the remains of Saint James in Compostela, in Santiago Cathedral. Photograph by the author.

tomb that could be dated to the supposed era of St James the Apostle.¹⁶¹ It must be remembered that the activity of ‘digging’ the past to find martyrs’ remains was common in early medieval Europe, but it was always controlled by the elites due to its huge ideological potential.¹⁶² But, as argued above, in parallel to this ideological creation there is a spatial strategy behind the choice of the placement of this new ecclesiastical centre, in an important road junction and strategic position to articulate a regional influence. Thus, again, the symbolic potential of reusing past remains is combined with the more pragmatic benefits of the road network and strategic location of an ancient site. This shows the significant capacity of the early medieval elites to create effective ideological and spatial strategies, and how this ability was particularly manifested in churches and monasteries as centres of power in the landscape.

¹⁶¹ López Alsina, *La ciudad de Santiago*, p. 102.

¹⁶² Effros, ‘Monuments and Memory’, pp. 118–19.

Church Dedications and Relics as Strategies of Ideological Power

Despite the serious problems involved in dating a church on the basis of its dedication, it is still possible to use the dedication when it is documented in contemporary texts or inscriptions, to reflect on the power strategies that lie behind the selection of a particular saint for the religious centre.¹⁶³ In this sense, dedications can help to distinguish between local, traditional cults and new ones and sometimes to relate the church with the context of spreading the dedication.¹⁶⁴

In early medieval Galicia some cults appear mainly to relate to earlier centuries. Dedications to St Martin are relatively common in north-west Iberia from the sixth century onwards, which can be related to the rise of Visigothic monasticism following the San Martin of Dumio mission.¹⁶⁵ Another example is San Felix, as there are several churches with seventh-century fabric associated with this cult, which is documented in written sources of that period.¹⁶⁶ The cults of St Mary and St Peter also seem to date from the late antique period in this area.

From the mid-eighth century new dedications appear, imported by external agents. Earlier dedications remained popular, but new socio-political contexts brought new dedications with their own ideological implications. In this respect it is interesting that contemporary documents from the archive of the monastery of Samos, which was closely linked to the 'resettlement' process, show a high percentage of new cults in the churches of the area surrounding the monastery.¹⁶⁷ That of San Julián (usually along with his wife, Santa Basilisa), patron of the old capital of the Visigothic Kingdom at Toledo, evoked the Visigothic connection of some groups of Mozarabic immigrants who had arrived in Galicia during the eighth and ninth centuries.¹⁶⁸ It was one of the preferred cults for elites linked to the 'resettlement' of north-west Iberia in these centuries. Another cult favoured by the new groups of 'settlers' in the same period was that of St Stephan (San Estevo), dedications to whom are only documented from the late eighth century onwards. Examples are San Estevo de Calvor (founded in the 785),¹⁶⁹ San Estevo de Sumoas

¹⁶³ Brogiolo and Chavarria Arnau, 'Chiese, territorio e dinamiche', p. 20.

¹⁶⁴ On the importance of saint dedications in early medieval churches, see Roberto Farinelli's paper in this volume.

¹⁶⁵ Andrade Cernadas, 'Los modelos', p. 592.

¹⁶⁶ Such as the autobiography of Valerio del Bierzo (Valério do Bierzo, *Autobiografía*, p. 113).

¹⁶⁷ D'Emilio, 'The Legend of Bishop Odoario', p. 73.

¹⁶⁸ Balañas Pérez, 'De Covadonga a Compostela', p. 371.

¹⁶⁹ Lucas Álvarez, *El tumbo de San Julián*, doc. 137.



Figure 7.3. Church of Santa Comba de Bande, Bande, Ourense. Source: Wikimedia.

(787),¹⁷⁰ and San Estevo de Ribas de Sil (perhaps ninth century).¹⁷¹ The same applies to Santa Eulalia. Although there is evidence that this cult was already popular in previous centuries, it also appears to have been favoured by immigrants from Mérida (Extremadura), where Eulalia was patron saint.¹⁷² Other dedications that seem to spread from the eighth century onwards are St Christopher, the Saviour, and St Michael.

However, the dedication that better reflects the expansion of a new cult linked to the reinforcement and expansion of the Asturian Kingdom is St James (Santiago). An example is the church of Santiago de Louredo, founded c. 820–30 by Abbot Senior.¹⁷³ This is an interestingly early date for this dedication, very close to the ‘discovery’ of the relics of St James in Compostela. It suggests that Abbot Senior, who founded other churches and monasteries along

¹⁷⁰ González Paz, ‘El diácono Rodrigo’.

¹⁷¹ Díaz y Díaz and Del Oro Trigo, ‘La diócesis de Ourense’, p. 390.

¹⁷² Balañas Pérez, ‘De Covadonga a Compostela’, p. 371.

¹⁷³ Sáez Sánchez and Sáez, *Colección diplomática*, doc. 1.

the central section of the river Minho and certainly enjoyed a certain degree of economic power and social prestige, was connected to the supralocal realm of Asturian power and its new ideological legitimization. The aforementioned church of Santiago de Toldaos (Láncara, Lugo), founded in 849, can be interpreted in a similar light.¹⁷⁴

There is some evidence for changes in dedications during this period, usually associated with church restoration during the ‘resettlement’ of Galicia. Sometimes this involved a genuine ideological and political strategy. This is what happened to the church of Santa Comba de Bande (Bande) (Figure 7.3), which during this period receives also the dedication to San Torcuato, whose relics were brought from the south of the Iberian Peninsula.

Along with church dedications, the possession of relics was another important ideological power strategy linked to the importance of saints in the early medieval mind. Indeed, churches held relics associated with the saint of their dedication. Relics in the early Middle Ages were considered to be symbols of ideological power,¹⁷⁵ which is visible in Galicia in three main respects.

Firstly, relics enhanced the fame of a church, and above all for pilgrimage. Studies of eighth- to ninth-century France have shown how ecclesiastical and monastic centres competed for the possession of Roman relics, which attracted pilgrims with miracles not seen at other shrines.¹⁷⁶ A similar factor can be detected in the creation of the major church of Santiago de Compostela, but were also present in many small rural churches, for example San Salvador de Paizás (Ramirás, Ourense) in which relics were consecrated by Bishop Sebastian in the year 889.¹⁷⁷

Secondly, it is important to note that the ‘finders’ and promoters of relics in the Iberian Peninsula, from late antiquity onwards, were usually members of high-status groups such as bishops, rich widows, nobles, and Jewish converts. They purported to act under divine inspiration and formed an elite which monopolized the relationship between God and the saints.¹⁷⁸ This may explain the abundant foundation of early medieval churches over previous Roman sites, particularly burial areas, in Galicia. Although there is scarce evidence, it seems likely that at least some of these Roman sites were originally interpreted as the

¹⁷⁴ Lucas Álvarez, *El tumbo de San Julián*, doc. 128.

¹⁷⁵ Le Jan, ‘Convents, Violence’; Castillo Maldonado, “Inventiones reliquiarvm”.

¹⁷⁶ Smith, *Aedificatio Sancti Locī*, p. 390; Le Jan, ‘Convents, Violence’, p. 244.

¹⁷⁷ Sáez Sánchez and Saez, *Colección diplomática*, doc. 7.

¹⁷⁸ Castillo Maldonado, “Inventiones reliquiarvm”, pp. 57–58.

tombs of saints,¹⁷⁹ and the dedications of the churches founded there usually correspond to late Roman martyrs.

Thirdly, from the mid-eighth century onwards churches in northern Spain had multiple altars — a result of Carolingian influence¹⁸⁰ — which meant that several saints were venerated in a single church. This involved the possession of a corresponding number of relics, as well as the construction of multiple apses (usually three), and indicates a higher economic investment in the materiality of the church. This was the case of Santiago de Toldaos, founded 849, which had additional dedications to SS Peter and Paul, St Christopher, St Laurent, and St George.¹⁸¹ In other cases, several churches were constructed close to each other, forming a single ecclesiastical complex dedicated to several saints.¹⁸² In both cases the increase of saints' cults implies a bigger symbolic power of the ecclesiastical centre, as well as a higher capacity to attract donations and to enhance the ideological prestige and legitimation of the founders.

Conclusions

The marked socio-political fragmentation that characterizes Galicia from the end of the Visigothic Kingdom favoured the foundation of a large number of small churches and monasteries as the primary means for local elites to express their power.¹⁸³ The resulting density of churches apparently exceeds that known for other northern Iberian regions, such as Asturias¹⁸⁴ and the Basque Country,¹⁸⁵ but manifested similar objectives: to build and enhance the economic, political, and ideological power of their founders. At the same time, and especially during the ninth century, Galicia became one of the main areas of expansion of the new Asturian Kingdom. This state-formation process led to the gradual reformulation of power relations at the local level, usually through royal agents or parvenu magnates from wealthy families.¹⁸⁶ Also in this field,

¹⁷⁹ Effros, 'Monuments and Memory'.

¹⁸⁰ Arbeiter, 'Early Hispanic Churches'.

¹⁸¹ Lucas Álvarez, *El tumbo de San Julián*, doc. 128.

¹⁸² See David Petts's contribution to this volume.

¹⁸³ See Tomás Ó Carragáin's contribution to this volume on the density of small churches in another fragmented European region, Ireland.

¹⁸⁴ Fernandez Conde, 'Las fuentes escritas'.

¹⁸⁵ Quirós Castillo, 'Las iglesias altomedievales'.

¹⁸⁶ Portela Silva, 'El rey y los obispos'.

the foundation of churches and monasteries played a crucial and active role, adding more complexity to this scenario.

Thus, a wide range of power strategies, closely interrelated, can be traced behind the foundation of these churches in eighth- to tenth-century Galicia. As argued in this chapter, churches were allowed to consolidate properties, to produce new income, to open and cultivate new lands, to articulate political control both at local and supralocal scales, to enable interaction between old and new elites, and to legitimate social power by means of their architecture, their location, their use of the past, and the power of the saints. The chosen strategies varied depending on the context and the objectives of the founder. Existing local elites generally sought to consolidate their increasingly disputed economic base, but they had fewer reasons to defend their ideological and political domain at a local scale. Instead newly arrived elites chiefly sought ideological legitimation because they already had a strong economic base.

Despite this diversity of actors, objectives, means, and ways, some common trends can be detected across the use of the churches and monasteries in the eighth and ninth centuries as part of the power strategies of Galician elites. Firstly, ecclesiastical centres played an essential role in the political and economic empowerment of different levels of elites in this period, enabling contested estates and political domains to be acquired, consolidated, and legitimized. Secondly, churches were an effective instrument to create networks of social-political relationships (both bottom-up and top-down) at different levels. These networks consisted of the integration into new social circles, the exchange of goods and favours, and the creation of dependencies. Thirdly, churches and monasteries in this period often had an important landscape role. Ecclesiastical foundations played a key role in the agricultural intensification and the opening of new lands in Galicia during this period. Moreover, most of the studied cases are strategically placed in relation to major roads, significant rivers, or key areas for the expansion of the Asturian Kingdom in Galicia. Fourthly, churches were a successful means of channelling the power of the sacred.¹⁸⁷ This potential could be utilized to a variety of aims thanks to a few repeated strategies based on the sacrality of churches, particularly the founders and donors becoming monks, the selection of saint dedications, and the use of relics. Finally, churches allowed, more than any other element of the landscape, family or collective interests to be preserved. This enabled different elites to cement long-term strategies of self-interest.

¹⁸⁷ Hamilton and Spicer, 'Defining the Holy'.

In all the cases, Galicia does not constitute an exception to general European trends in this period, as shown by studies of other regions such as northern France,¹⁸⁸ south Germany,¹⁸⁹ or northern Italy,¹⁹⁰ where churches and monasteries played an important role in shaping the changing contemporary political, economic, and ideological power strategies.

Churches ultimately contributed to an increase in the socio-political complexity of Galicia across the eighth and ninth centuries. In the first half of the tenth century, soon after the end of our study period, we can detect the beginnings of major regional ecclesiastical centres, such as at the monasteries of Sobrado and Celanova, founded by the most powerful aristocratic families of the new Kingdom of León (910–1230) which prefigures the feudal period. However, it is in the foundation of churches in the eighth and ninth centuries that we find the basis of the future consolidation of these major aristocracies. Some church foundations and their related power strategies were successful, and some were not, which is why it is important to analyse and understand the strategy behind each example and its evolution from a broad and interdisciplinary perspective.

¹⁸⁸ Le Jan, 'Convents, Violence'; Lebecq, 'The Role of the Monasteries'.

¹⁸⁹ Innes, *State and Society*, pp. 16–50.

¹⁹⁰ La Rocca, 'Le élites, chiese e sepolture'; Brogiolo and Chavarría Arnau, 'Chiese, territorio e dinamiche'.

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HEIDENHEIM AND SAMOS: MONASTIC REMEMBRANCE OF THE 'ANGLO- SAXON MISSION' IN SOUTHERN GERMANY AND THE 'MOZARABIC RESETTLEMENT' OF NORTHERN SPAIN COMPARED

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Introduction

At first sight, the 'Anglo-Saxon Mission' in southern Germany and the 'Mozarabic resettlement' in northern Spain seem to be too different for sensible comparison. The foundation of the monastery of Heidenheim, located in modern Bavaria, by the Anglo-Saxon missionary Wynnebald in the year 751 or 752 was nearly contemporaneous with the first resettlement of the monastery of Samos in Galicia by monks from al-Andalus in the 760s (Map 8.1). Nevertheless, the dissimilarities between the two cases are evident. The Anglo-Saxon founders of Heidenheim came from an England that had already been evangelized during the sixth century. As we can see in the different *Vitae* of Anglo-Saxon missionaries, their departure to the Continent was closely related to the ideal of the Rome pilgrimage. These ideals linked the missionaries, who descended from aristocratic families in the majority of cases, with the Anglo-Saxon kings.¹ The

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¹ Palmer, *Anglo-Saxons in a Frankish World*, pp. 41–76.

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Map 8.1.
Location map of
the two monasteries
studied and compared
in this paper. Map by
José Carlos Sánchez-
Pardo using Demis
WMS World Map.

situation of the Andalusian monks who refounded the monastery of Samos in Galicia during the so-called ‘Mozarabic resettlement’ in the eighth and ninth centuries appears to be completely different. Modern research maintains that neither the ideals of pilgrimage nor the aim to proselytize moved them to leave their homeland, especially from the 750s onwards, but their opposition to the Muslim domination established in southern Spain by the invasion of 711.² The common ideals of a Christian society are not regarded as the causes of their migration, but rather tensions among a Christianity characterized by Arabicization and Islamicization.³ Iberian monasticism is therefore seen as largely cut off from Central European developments until the eleventh century.⁴

As Marc Bloch emphasizes in his important paper on the potential of the comparative method, unusual comparisons may be a particularly powerful way

² For example, Manzano Moreno, ‘La conquista del 711’.

³ For example, Bango Torviso ‘El arte mozárabe’, p. 41; Andrade Cernadas ‘Los modelos monásticos’, p. 600.

⁴ For example, Cocheril, *Études sur le monachisme*, pp. 22, 30.

of challenging the modern imagination,⁵ and the analysis of disparate objects can provoke revealing interdependencies. Comparison of disparate cases can inspire the search for analogies and the profitable re-examination of sources,⁶ and by comparing the reasons for similar developments attention may be drawn to the peculiarities in each case.⁷ Contact between Iberian monks and Anglo-Saxon missionaries has been previously explored.⁸ Arabic annotated Latin manuscripts, probably originating from southern Spain, were preserved in Montecassino,⁹ a monastic centre with close contacts to the social environment of Boniface and his followers.¹⁰ Early documents show that pilgrims came to Boniface's sepulchre in Fulda from *Spania*, a term mainly used for the Muslim-dominated area of the Iberian Peninsula.¹¹ The Anglo-Saxon missionary Willibald, one of the founders of Heidenheim, came into contact with Iberian Christians during both his famous journey to Christian sites in the Orient¹² and in the monastery of Montecassino.¹³

Nevertheless, this paper does not seek to pursue these relations between the Anglo-Saxon mission on the Continent and Iberian Christians from al-Andalus.¹⁴ Its aim is to compare different regions of Europe to elucidate relations between churches and aristocratic elites by analysing monastic remembrance of the process of church foundation. The monasteries of Heidenheim and Samos provide the opportunity for comparison, since the two communities were very early foundations, in their regions, of the Anglo-Saxon mission and the 'Mozarabic resettlement' respectively. In both cases, modern research assumes mainly political reasons for these foundations. However, the preserved documents of the two monasteries make it possible to examine the self-perception of

⁵ Bloch, 'Für eine vergleichende Geschichtsbetrachtung', p. 130.

⁶ Bloch, 'Für eine vergleichende Geschichtsbetrachtung', p. 125.

⁷ Bloch, 'Für eine vergleichende Geschichtsbetrachtung', p. 134.

⁸ Pérez de Urbel, *Los monjes españoles*, II, 253–54.

⁹ Aillet, 'Las glosas como fuente', p. 26.

¹⁰ Schmid, 'Die Frage nach den Anfängen', pp. 129–33.

¹¹ Rudolf von Fulda, *Vita Leobae Abatissae*, c. 23, p. 130.

¹² Hugelburc von Heidenheim, *Vita Willibaldi*, c. 4, pp. 92–102, especially pp. 94–96; Rotter, *Abendland und Sarazenen*, pp. 45–61.

¹³ Hugelburc von Heidenheim, *Vita Willibaldi*, c. 5, p. 102. Simonet, *Historia de los mozárabes*, I, 175, assumed that these Christians came from Muslim al-Andalus.

¹⁴ For justified criticism of *Kulturtransfer* — the transfer of cultural goods among different societies and cultural spaces — see Gotter, 'Akkulturation' als Methodenproblem.

the migrating groups in relation to local lordship. Following the perspective of the present volume, it will discuss how both monastic groups channelled different power strategies in their social contexts.

The Social Context of the Foundations

In searching for similarities between the foundation of Heidenheim and the resettlement of Samos, several things attract attention. First of all we may examine parallels between the regions where the foundations took place. Kings paid heed to the royal penetration of the two regions, for example, by the installation of followers and by supporting the foundation of churches and monasteries. This was accompanied by many conflicts between royal power and local elites. Heidenheim was founded in the so-called 'Nordgau', a region influenced by numerous political tensions between the Carolingians and the dukes of Bavaria (see Map 8.2 below). The foundation of the diocese of Eichstätt together with monasteries like Heidenheim may therefore have established a kind of 'Sicherheitszone' (security zone) between two political blocks.¹⁵ Despite the different historical context, the resettlement of Samos took place in a similar situation: important parts of Galicia, extending to the river Miño, belonged to the lands already reconquered by King Alfonso I. These lands — characterized by revolts against the King — were reorganized and integrated into the royal dominion (see Map 8.3 below).¹⁶ It is therefore unsurprising that the monastery of Samos is regarded as an instrument of royal politics.¹⁷

In both the foundation of Heidenheim and the resettlement of Samos, several sources indicate that the migrants originated from social elites. As with other Anglo-Saxon missionaries,¹⁸ the *Vitae Willibaldi et Wynnebaldis* alludes to the noble descent of the founders of Heidenheim.¹⁹ The migrants to Samos may have had comparable social status: King Ordoño I around 760 provided

¹⁵ Weinfurter, 'Das Bistum Willibalds', pp. 14–16.

¹⁶ 'Chronica Adefonsi Tertii Regis', ed. by Bonnaz, c. 9, pp. 47–48, c. 11, p. 49, and c. 15.1, pp. 53–54; 'Chronicon Albeldense', ed. by Bonnaz, c. 47.1, pp. 25–26. On the so-called 'reconquest' of the north of the Iberian Peninsula and the different role of churches in this process, see the essays by Juan Antonio Quirós and Igor Santos, by José Carlos Sánchez-Pardo, and by Luís Fontes in the present volume.

¹⁷ For example, Ríos Camacho, 'Mozarabismo en la Gallaecia', pp. 261–78.

¹⁸ For example, Schipperges, *Bonifatius ac socii eius*.

¹⁹ For example, Hugelburc von Heidenheim, *Vita Willibaldi*, c. 2, p. 107.

the means for the priest Vicente and his companion Audofredo to pay for the monastery and its goods.²⁰ In particular, the so-called 'testament of Ofilón', an abbot of Samos from Muslim Córdoba, demonstrates the self-perception of a monastic elite. According to this text, written about 872, the Andalusian monks thought themselves able to renew monastic life in Samos. Therefore, they brought commodities like books, robes, and liturgical objects from al-Andalus. As the testament of Ofilón underlines the preciousness of these commodities it links the provenance of the monks from Córdoba and their ability for increasing the prestige of Samos.²¹

In consideration of our further information on monasticism in Muslim Córdoba, the detailed listing of precious commodities brought by the monks from Córdoba to Samos might also be interpreted as evidence for the high status of the monks. The main source that the founders and occupants of monasteries in Córdoba were members of social elites are the problematic acts of the *Martyrs of Córdoba*, written by Eulogius in the ninth century.²² The monasteries of Tabanos and San Salvador de Peñamelaria, for example, which are situated in the sierra of Córdoba, were important lay foundations.²³ Eulogius characterizes the monasteries as open to laypersons, who could live there without taking the monastic order, and reports the conversion of distinguished laymen to monasticism.²⁴ In the light of these sources, it is unsurprising that a layman called Egila, who also came from al-Andalus during the eighth century, founded the monastery of Calvor, close to Samos.²⁵ Additionally, the famous inscriptions of the north Iberian monasteries San Miguel de Escalada near León and San Martín de Castañeda in the province of Zamora²⁶ could be interpreted as expressions of a social elite. In declaring that the church buildings were constructed without any imperial order (*non iussu imperiali*), the inscriptions seem to reflect the self-assurance of the monks from al-Andalus.

²⁰ Lucas Alvarez, *El tumbo de San Julián*, no. 1, pp. 61–62.

²¹ Lucas Alvarez, *El tumbo de San Julián*, no. 5, p. 71.

²² There is a vast bibliography on this topic. For a critical discussion of the sources, see Christys, *Christians in al-Andalus*, pp. 52–79; Monferrer Sala, 'Mitografía hagiomartirial', p. 444; Zwanzig, 'Märtyrer in Córdoba', pp. 250–52.

²³ Eulogius, 'Memoriale Sanctorum', lib. II., c. 2, pp. 402–03, and lib. III., c. 2, § 2, p. 453; see also Arce Sáinz, 'Los monasterios cordobeses', p. 158.

²⁴ Eulogius, 'Memoriale Sanctorum', lib. II., c. 2, pp. 402–03, and lib. III., c. 11, § 1, p. 452; see also Yelo Templado, 'El monacato mozárabe', p. 456.

²⁵ Lucas Alvarez, *El tumbo de San Julián*, no. 33, pp. 119–22.

²⁶ García Lobo, *Las inscripciones*, no. 8, pp. 64–65; Gómez Moreno *Iglesias mozárabes*, p. 169.

Heidenheim and Samos were both founded during migration processes now thought to be part of a comprehensive process of acculturation. Anglo-Saxon influences on the Continent are visible in contemporary literature.²⁷ The monks from al-Andalus are regarded as protagonists of cultural transfers, although due to intensive debate as to the correct definition of the term 'Mozarab', the character of these transfers is highly controversial. On the one hand, the monks migrating to the Christian North of the Iberian Peninsula are considered as members of an anti-Muslim resistance in al-Andalus, who preserved Visigothic traditions.²⁸ On the other hand, the importance of Arabic anthroponyms and toponyms, as well as the emergence of Arabic-Oriental cultural forms in the Christian dominion, is said to have been caused by a mainly monastic migration.²⁹ On an abstract level, debate about the nature of 'Mozarabs' may revise our perspective on processes of acculturation. Contradictions in modern definitions of the term make it apparent that the model of cultural transfer by mostly homogeneous cultural groups is not able to describe the complexity of cultural entanglements.³⁰

A Comparison of Sources

The available sources for Heidenheim and Samos are comparably problematic: in the absence of significant archaeological evidence for each monastery, we have to refer mainly to written sources. The *Vita Wynnebaldi*, written by the nun Hugeburc of Heidenheim at the end of the eighth century, is our main source for Heidenheim. In the case of Samos we have to rely mainly upon royal charters, preserved in a cartulary composed at the beginning of the thirteenth century during a time of many conflicts in the community.³¹ The cartulary of Samos also contains the so-called 'testament' of the Andalusian abbot Ofilón, dated to the year 872 by modern research. This document might be one of the few preserved self-testimonies of Andalusian monks. Both sources are prob-

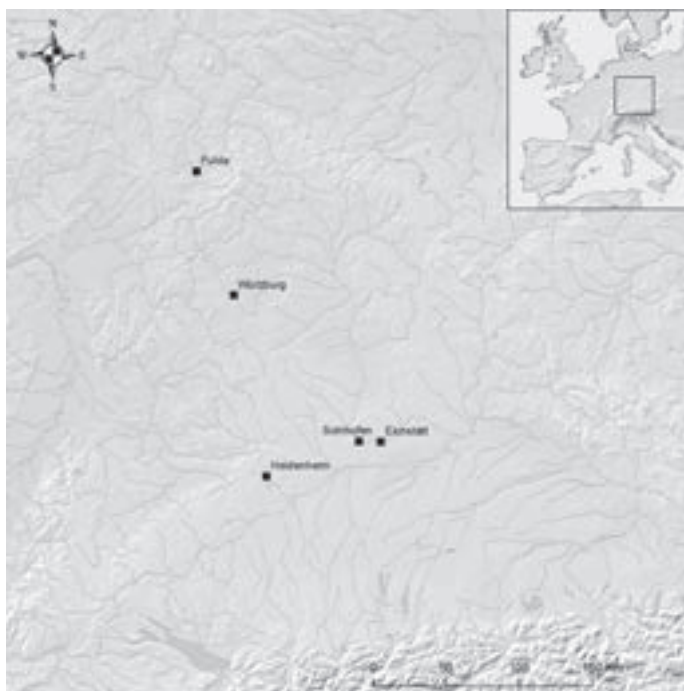
²⁷ For example, Sauer, *Angelsächsisches Erbe in München*.

²⁸ Andrade Cernadas, 'Los modelos monásticos', p. 600; Bango Torviso, 'El arte mozárabe', p. 40.

²⁹ Gómez Moreno, *Iglesias mozárabes*; Díaz-Jiménez, 'Inmigración mozárabe'.

³⁰ Maser, 'Die Mozaraber'; Maser, 'Von Mozarabern zu Mozarabismen'; for the debate in general, see Borgolte 'Migrationen als transkulturelle Verflechtungen im mittelalterlichen Europa'.

³¹ Arias, *Historia del Real Monasterio*, p. 137.



Map 8.2.
Location map of
the monasteries
mentioned in the text
in the region around
Heidenheim. Map by
José Carlos Sánchez-
Pardo using Demis
WMS World Map.

lematic: aspects of the *Vita Wynnebaldi*'s report on the foundation of the monastery have been challenged,³² as has the authenticity of Ofilón's testament.³³

Even though the source material might appear unsuitable for the approach of this volume at first view, it does offer some opportunities. Both in the *Vita Wynnebaldi* and in the charters of Samos, the materiality of the church buildings plays an important role, although they are no substitute for archaeological finds. Nevertheless, the written sources allow alternative observations: we can examine medieval perceptions of the social environment of these monasteries and interpret the symbolism of the church buildings.

At first sight a comparison of the written accounts of the church and monastery buildings illustrates the differences between Heidenheim and Samos. Each has a very different approach to connecting the foundation of its monastery with the former Christian traditions of its site. In the case of Heidenheim, the aim of

³² For example, Eigler 'Wunibalds Heidenheim', pp. 22–26; Störmer 'Klosterplanung und Spielregeln', p. 6.

³³ Lucas Alvarez, *El tumbo de San Julián*, no. 5, pp. 69–70; Aillet, *Les Mozarabes*, pp. 253–54.

the *Vita Wynnebaldi* was to emphasize the importance of Wynnebald's role in the foundation of the monastery, meaning that the text does not mention any pre-existing church buildings. However, archaeological evidence from ecclesiastical structures around Heidenheim and comparable monasteries founded by Anglo-Saxon missionaries indicates that the existence of church buildings prior to Wynnebald's foundation is possible.³⁴ Neither the Bonifacian centre Fulda nor the Anglo-Saxon foundations of Eichstätt and Solnhofen — located near Heidenheim — were erected in solitude (Map 8.2). The *Vita Wynnebaldi* nevertheless tends to obscure the continuity of already existing ecclesiastical and political structures, as do important accounts of Anglo-Saxon monastic foundations in the region, such as the *Vita Sturmi* of Fulda or the *Vita Sualonis* of Solnhofen.³⁵

In contrast, the case of Samos seems to be completely different. The existence of a fragmentary inscription is regarded as evidence that the monastery, probably founded by Martin of Dumio during the sixth century, had been renewed by Bishop Ermenfried of Lugo during the seventh century.³⁶ Unlike the *Vita Wynnebaldi*, the sources concerning the reformation of Samos tended to emphasize continuities with pre-existing structures: as the controversial testament of Abbot Ofilón informs us, the Andalusian monks knew that Samos had been founded by their forefathers. In the eyes of Ofilón and his companions, the decline of Samos was caused by the lethargy of the clerics and the laics who had lost the obedience to the holy rule.³⁷ The intentions of the monks of Samos to present the resettlement by migrants from al-Andalus as an important effort to continue Visigothic traditions were not alone. All known documents concerning the migration of monks from al-Andalus followed comparable patterns in emphasizing that the monks continued an interrupted Christian tradition.³⁸

³⁴ Parsons, 'Some Churches', p. 40.

³⁵ Zwanzig, *Gründungsmythen fränkischer Klöster*, pp. 55–71.

³⁶ Mundó, 'La inscripción visigoda', pp. 59–60; Arias Cuenllas, *Historia del monasterio*, pp. 25–32.

³⁷ 'As the monastery [...], which is recognized to be founded by the forefathers, though it was violated later on by the phlegm of clerics and by laymen and nothing showed the former obedience to the holy rule'. Lucas Alvarez, *El tumbo de San Julián*, no. 5, p. 70: 'quoniam monasterium [...] ab antiquis patribus fundatum fuisse dinoscitur postea tamen per torporem negligente clericorum a laicis est violatum atque nichil ut pridem sancte regule exhibentes obsequium'.

³⁸ Zwanzig, 'Monastische Migration', p. 222.



Map 8.3.
Monasteries of
north-western Spain
mentioned in the
text. Map by José
Carlos Sánchez-
Pardo using Demis
WMS World Map.

The construction of new church buildings can be physical manifestations of reform, as in the cases of Escalada or Castañeda (Map 8.3).³⁹ Although a charter for Samos, issued by Ordoño II and dated to the year 922, articulates the importance of the prominent old church buildings as expressions of continuity, it also reports the failure of all efforts to resettle Samos by monks from al-Andalus and describes the decline of monastic life. The main reference for the life of the forefathers and for the evaluation of the new monastic life in Samos was a literal quoted inscription from Visigothic times.⁴⁰ The citation in this document referred to problems of monastic enclosure, mainly the separation from the outside world. However, a document dated to the year 944 shows that the inscriptions of the church building were even regarded as a guideline

³⁹ Dodds, *Architecture and Ideology*, pp. 64–69.

⁴⁰ ‘now we want to confirm our basilica by the augmentation of the monastery under the holy monastic order, as it was in former times and as it reverberates written on this stone’. Lucas Alvarez, *El tumbo de San Julián*, no. S-2, p. 444: ‘nunc volens hanc ipsam vestram baseligam sub monastica religiose, aucto monasterii hordine confirmare, sicut ex antiquo fuerat, quomodo ibi scriptum resonat in illa petra’.

for the whole monastic life of the community.⁴¹ The church building with its inscriptions became the memory of the monastic traditions and symbolized the main criterion for the evaluation of the monastic life in Samos.

This finding bears comparison with Heidenheim, where the graveside of Wynnebald, rather than the inscriptions of Samos, became the most important normative symbol. During his lifetime Wynnebald was the living rule — the *regula viva* — of the monastic community.⁴² After his death his sepulchre and his miracle-working symbolized the continuing presence of the founder. The sepulchre obliged the monastic community to keep on following Wynnebald as a role model. The symbolization of the founder's normative authority by his graveside may be noticed in several other cases, too.⁴³ But precisely the comparison to Samos is eloquent as to the need to interpret the function of church buildings as normative memory in a broader sense.

The Monasteries in their Social Environment

Did the perceptions of the church buildings also influence the relations of the monks to the social environment? The documents of Heidenheim and Samos contain information on political as well as ecclesiastical structures. We can therefore examine how the monks' interpretation of the past influenced their perception of the monasteries' social environment and structures of lordship. However we also have to consider that the different genres of documents and the different intended audiences had influences on the process of remembrance.

The information from the *Vita Wynnebaldis* concerning Heidenheim's foundation is contradictory. As discussed above, the reference to the ideal of a foundation *in eremo* prohibited mention of former church buildings. Immediately after its account of the monastery's foundation, the *Vita Wynnebaldis* explains that Wynnebald had had to combat pagan rites among the clerics living near the monastery of Heidenheim.⁴⁴ As we know from many other cases, the activ-

⁴¹ 'King Ordoño ordered to send brothers there to install there monastic life as we find it written on the stones'. Lucas Alvarez, *El tumbo de San Julián*, no. 35, pp. 125–28: 'ordinavit rex domnus Ordonius mittere ibidem fratres, qui posuissent ibidem monasticam vitam, sicut invenimus scriptum in petris'.

⁴² Hugeburc von Heidenheim, *Vita Willibaldi*, c. 9, p. 113.

⁴³ Sauer, *Fundatio und Memoria*, pp. 103, 176; Cubitt, 'Monastic Memory and Identity'; Zwanzig *Gründungsmythen fränkischer Klöster*, pp. 72–79.

⁴⁴ Hugeburc von Heidenheim, *Vita Willibaldi*, c. 7, pp. 111–12.

ity of Boniface and his disciples should be characterized as reform rather than as mission.⁴⁵ Obviously even in the eyes of Hugeburc the primary purpose of the monastery was not to proselytize pagans, but to reform existing ecclesiastical structures.

From a modern perspective the *Vita Wynnebaldis* seems to be very contradictory, although from a medieval point of view it made some important statements. Referring to the elimination of wilderness, the *de novo* construction of the monastery symbolized two main things: on the one hand the intention of Wynnebald and his disciples to continue the traditions of the desert fathers,⁴⁶ and on the other hand the aim of Wynnebald to reform the clergy around the monastery.

Similar observations are possible concerning social and political structures. The foundation report of the *Vita Wynnebaldis* describes the existing social structures around Heidenheim from a hagiographic perspective. According to this text, Wynnebald mainly received support from his brother Willibald, bishop of the monastery and the developing diocese of Eichstätt. Even though the *Vita* refers to the solitude wherein Wynnebald founded his monastic community, we read that he could buy lands from the residents, who subsequently donated lands to the monastery.⁴⁷ The foundation report of the *Vita Wynnebaldis* is fragmentary. It may be contrasted with the *Vita Willibaldi's* foundation report of the Eichstätt monastery. This text, also written by the nun Hugeburc of Heidenheim, makes mention of the 'Spielregeln', the rules of a monastery foundation as a highly political process.⁴⁸ Besides Boniface and Suidger, the lordly donator of the lands of Eichstätt, Duke Odilo of Bavaria was also involved.⁴⁹ In other cases, like the important Bonifacian foundation of the Fulda monastery or of Solnhofen near to Heidenheim and Eichstätt, even the Carolingian rulers took part in the foundation.⁵⁰

On the one hand the contradictions of the *Vita Wynnebaldis* concerning the structures of lordship can most likely be explained by the hagiographic nature of the text, which was intended to describe the factual history of the founda-

⁴⁵ Wood, *The Missionary Life*, pp. 18 and 59.

⁴⁶ Zwanzig, *Gründungsmythen fränkischer Klöster*, pp. 55–60; see also Brunert, *Das Ideal der Wüstenaskese*, pp. 11–12.

⁴⁷ Hugeburc von Heidenheim, *Vita Willibaldi*, c. 7, p. 111.

⁴⁸ Störmer, 'Klosterplanung und Spielregeln'.

⁴⁹ Hugeburc von Heidenheim, *Vita Willibaldi*, c. 5, p. 104.

⁵⁰ Zwanzig, *Gründungsmythen fränkischer Klöster*, p. 70.

tion. On the other hand we also have to consider the historical context of the time the text was written. The primary version of the *Vita* aimed to remember Wynnebald as a monastery founder and a family ancestor. According to hagiographic topoi the main role for the foundation of the monastery was attributed to the saint. At the same time he was connected to the monastic ideal of solitude originating from the veneration of the desert fathers. The *Vita Wynnebal-di* complemented these ideals of monastic foundation by the self-perception of a kindred Anglo-Saxon elite. This elite had to integrate itself in a region obviously influenced by numerous political tensions between the Carolingians and the dukes of Bavaria. Despite this situation, the founders of Heidenheim aimed to emphasize the independence of their foundation.⁵¹

As stated elsewhere, a detailed analysis of the *Vita Wynnebal-di* offers valuable clues as to the relations between a monastery and its laymen. Breaks concerning style and content indicate that the miracle report was added to the *Vita Wynnebal-di* in several phases.⁵² Regarding relations with secular elites, the early versions of the text limit Wynnebald's miracle-working to the monastery's community,⁵³ whilst in the later additions Wynnebald's miracle-working became increasingly manifest to the lay benefactors of the monastery.⁵⁴ It is probably no coincidence that the report on the construction of a new church in Heidenheim, which is part of the later additions to the *Vita Wynnebal-di*, recognizes the involvement of the general populace in the building work. The stone-built church implies that these supporters of the monastery were powerful.⁵⁵

The written sources make it possible to deduce that the church building became a symbol of the relations between the monastery and its social environment, which is emphasized by structural changes in Wynnebald's sepulchre. In the course of their elevation, Wynnebald's relics were made accessible for laymen.⁵⁶ Based on the commendable translation of Andreas Bauch, previous research located the new graveside of Wynnebald in the choir of the church.⁵⁷

⁵¹ Zwanzig, *Gründungsmythen fränkischer Klöster*, p. 94.

⁵² Zwanzig, *Gründungsmythen fränkischer Klöster*, pp. 90–93.

⁵³ Hugeburc von Heidenheim, *Vita Willibaldi*, c. 10, p. 114.

⁵⁴ Hugeburc von Heidenheim, *Vita Willibaldi*, c. 11–12, p. 115.

⁵⁵ Störmer, 'Klosterplanung und Spielregeln', p. 7.

⁵⁶ Hugeburc von Heidenheim, *Vita Willibaldi*, c. 13, p. 116.

⁵⁷ 'Until now not the whole church was thoroughly erected, but a porticus in the eastern zone had been built hastily, that the benign athlete of the Almighty could be entombed there in the crypt'. Hugeburc von Heidenheim, *Vita Wynnebal-di*, ed. by Bauch, p. 175, n. 51: 'Non

In my opinion, the term 'porticus' used by Hugeburc must be interpreted in another sense: the relics of Wynnebald were obviously translated to a lateral chamber in the eastern part of the church, as is known, for example, from royal burial sites in Anglo-Saxon England.⁵⁸ Whilst the old tomb of Wynnebald remained preserved⁵⁹ and was accessible only for the monastery's community, the new church building and the *porticus* containing his sepulchre connected the monastery with its social environment.⁶⁰

Unlike Heidenheim, before the tenth century the documents of Samos do not allow firm conclusions to be drawn concerning the function of the church buildings, or their interpretation as a normative memory structuring the relations between the community and its social context.⁶¹ For the first time a document dated in 922 cites the presumably Visigothic inscription⁶² to argue against trade within the monastery and against the access of women.⁶³ Bearing in mind the complexity of relations between the laymen and the monastic community in Heidenheim, it is unsurprising that the particular aim of the reforms was supported by important laymen like Gutier Menéndez, the father of the well-known St Rosendo, founder of the monastery of Celanova and Bishop of Mondoñedo. Further evidence for the broad context of the reform in Samos in the year 922 is a charter dated to 902. This document relates the intention of a priest named Theodonandus to renew the monastic life in the monastery of Calvor, supposedly founded by his ancestor Egila on his way from southern Spain, and uses almost the same words as the document of Ordoño II.⁶⁴

omnis illa aecclesia adhuc edita subtiliter in sublime erigebatur, sed unus porticus in orientale plaga prepropero ponebatur, ut illic almus Altissimi anthletus condiretur in cripto'. See also Hugeburc von Heidenheim, *Vita Willibaldi*, c. 13, p. 116.

⁵⁸ Wilson, *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 163–69; see also Angenendt, "In porticu ecclesiae sepultus".

⁵⁹ At the end of the *Vita Wynnebaldi* we read: 'The sarcophagus still stands firmly and unharmed in the church, as it was built in former times before he left our world'. Hugeburc von Heidenheim, *Vita Willibaldi*, c. 13, p. 117: 'qui sarcophago solida et integra stat in aecclesia, que iam olim, antequam de seculo migraret, facta fuerat'.

⁶⁰ Zwanzig, *Gründungsmythen fränkischer Klöster*, p. 99.

⁶¹ See for example the discussions on the function of the so called 'Capilla del Ciprés', an old building that might have been the primitive monastery church (Yzquierdo Perrín, *Arte Medieval*).

⁶² See note 36 above.

⁶³ Lucas Alvarez, *El tumbo de San Julián*, no. S-2, p. 444.

⁶⁴ Lucas Alvarez, *El tumbo de San Julián*, no. 33, pp. 119–22.

Prior to this, the relations between the monastery of Samos and its social environment would have been structured by the self-perception of the monks as agents of continuity with Visigothic traditions. During the eighth century, there were several monasteries and churches put under the control of the Andalusian abbot Argericus from Samos.⁶⁵ These privileges were confirmed to his successors with minimal changes. As a charter of King Ordoño I for Abbot Ofilón documents, the main aim was the reform of these communities: Ofilón was obliged to visit these churches periodically and to correct any errors in practice. Even the priests near the monastery of Samos were explicitly subjected to Ofilón's authority. Ofilón had the power to 'clear' vices (*vitia*) as well as to judge priests who had escaped from their monasteries and were acting as bandits or magicians. Since the document highlights the importance of the periodical intercession of the monks with God (*letaniae*), the main aim was a liturgical reformation.⁶⁶ The monasteries were obviously part of the royal aim to reform Christianity, documented, for example, in the *Chronicon Albeldense*⁶⁷ and the *Chronicle* of Alfons III.⁶⁸

Despite this, the monks of Samos didn't see themselves as instruments of royal politics. As the so-called 'testament of Ofilón' informs us, the abbot coming from Córdoba and his companions saw themselves as instruments of God to renew monastic life in Samos. This self-perception is reflected in the inscriptions of Castañeda and Escalada, mentioned above. These inscriptions combined a sense of the proximity of the monks to the Asturian kings with aspirations of their own independence.

The awareness of possible differences between the actual role of the monks in royal politics and their perception of their aloofness from these things might explain the contradictions in the documents of Samos. Different bodies were obviously involved in curating the monastery's 'cultural memory'.⁶⁹ As the resettlement of the monastery by monks from al-Andalus needed three tries, numerous documents seem to have been lost: remembrance of the resettlement

⁶⁵ Lucas Alvarez, *El tumbo de San Julián*, no. 41, p. 136.

⁶⁶ Lucas Alvarez, *El tumbo de San Julián*, no. 3, p. 66.

⁶⁷ 'Chronicon Albeldense', ed. by Bonnaz, c. 45, p. 25; 'Chronicon Albeldense', ed. by Gil Fernández, c. 15, § 10, p. 175.

⁶⁸ 'Chronica Adefonsi tertii regis', ed. by Bonnaz, c. 9, pp. 47–48; 'Chronica Adefonsi Tertii Chronica', ed. by Gil Fernández, c. 17, pp. 136–37.

⁶⁹ Concerning the concept of cultural memory, see Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*. I show its value for the examination of monastic sources in Zwanzig, *Gründungsmythen fränkischer Klöster*.

was mainly sustained by the Asturian kings.⁷⁰ It is therefore unsurprising that, together with the Andalusian monks, the kings appear as the main actors of the resettlement in the preserved documents. However, the gaps and contradictions within the remembrance of the foundation of Samos cannot wholly be explained by the loss of documents. According to the charters, the different phases of resettlement were clearly accompanied by conflict within the monastic community. A charter of Ordoño I, dating to as early as 853, informs us that the monks alienated several goods after the Andalusian abbot Argericus had died.⁷¹ The aforementioned charter of Ordoño II relates disciplinary problems and discord within the community.⁷² Regarding these conflicts, the controversial testament of Abbot Ofilón isn't necessarily a later forgery. Despite all of these conflicts within the community of Samos, Ofilón and his companions tended to present themselves as able and legitimate successors of their ancient Visigothic forefathers. The 'oblivion' of important parts of 'Mozarabic resettlement' and its disciplinary problems may therefore be interpreted as the intention to connect directly with the monastery's Visigothic past. Besides the judicial implications of the documents this main aim formed the reflection on the structures of lordship and underlined the role of the kings.

The Interpretation of Space

The monks' interpretation of their monastery's history did not only affect its buildings and their immediate surroundings, but also changed their interpretation of political and sacral space in a broader sense. The testament of Abbot Ofilón, for example, contrasted the negative description of the disciplinary state of Samos with very positive references to the provenance of the monks from Córdoba. They titled themselves 'citizens of Córdoba' (*cives cordobenses*) and called the capital of the Emirate their *patria*. Furthermore, their migration was not perceived as escape, but rather as divine fate.⁷³ These statements are astonishing if we take into consideration the fact that Ofilón came from

⁷⁰ Lucas Alvarez, *El tumbo de San Julián*, no. 35, pp. 125–28, and no. S-2, p. 445.

⁷¹ Lucas Alvarez, *El tumbo de San Julián*, no. 41, p. 136.

⁷² Lucas Alvarez, *El tumbo de San Julián*, no. S-2, pp. 443–47.

⁷³ 'permitted by the benignity of God and with the help of God we were conducted and came from the region of our origin to Galicia and we — citizens of Cordoba — left our homeland hastily'. Lucas Alvarez, *El tumbo de San Julián*, no. 5, p. 70: 'dispensante Dei clementia et auxiliante Deo, ducti sumus et pervenimus de regione in finibus Galletie eo quod nos nationes fuimus et cives cordovenses patria properavimus'.

Córdoba during the persecution of Christians by Emir Muhammad I in the 850s, as narrated in the works of Eulogius and Albarus on the *Martyrs of Córdoba*. The documents of Samos are not unique in this respect: the inscriptions of the monastery of Escalada termed Córdoba as *patria*,⁷⁴ and other documents support the assertion that the migration of the Andalusian monks was not perceived as escape.⁷⁵

These conclusions do not challenge the fact that Christian migrations from al-Andalus were often perceived and interpreted as an escape.⁷⁶ However, the self-perception of the monks as heirs of the Visigothic traditions may contradict this interpretation. If we compare the drastic narration of Ofilón concerning the disciplinary state of Samos with the stated aim of Albarus and Eulogius to connect the preaching of the martyrs of Córdoba with the Christian 'Great Commission' — Jesus's original instruction to his followers to spread his teachings⁷⁷ — it becomes obvious that the intention to stress continuity with the Visigothic past was able even to erase distinctions between Muslim and Christian dominion. Therefore we should be aware of the several meanings that the term *spania* received after the Muslim conquest of 711.⁷⁸ Already from the ninth century the famous Asturian chronicles reflect this diversity. The term *spania* could — as we may read in the *Chronica Prophetica* — describe a political community that had perished due to its sinfulness and should be reconstituted.⁷⁹ In the context of the *Chronicle* of Alfons III, the term *spania* symbolized a *terra desiderabilis* that — despite its destruction by the Muslim conquest — was still present in social memory.⁸⁰ The choronym *Spania*, on the other hand, was used — as we may see in the *Chronicle* of Alfons III — to describe the Muslim realm on the Iberian Peninsula, which was mainly perceived as a military danger.⁸¹ The intention of the Asturian kings to connect with Visigothic

⁷⁴ García Lobo, *Las inscripciones de San Miguel*, no. 8, pp. 64–65.

⁷⁵ Zwanzig, 'Monastische Migration', pp. 222–23.

⁷⁶ Zwanzig, 'Monastische Migration', pp. 221–22.

⁷⁷ Cutler, 'The Ninth-Century Spanish Martyrs Movement', pp. 325–26.

⁷⁸ As Maravall, *El concepto de España*, pp. 222–43, has shown in his important study.

⁷⁹ 'Chronica prophetica', ed. by Bonnaz, c. 2, § 1–2, p. 3, and c. 6, p. 7; 'Chronicon Albedense', ed. by Gil Fernández, c. 19, § 1, p. 187, and c. 17, § 3b, p. 183.

⁸⁰ 'Chronica Adefonsi Tertii Regis', ed. by Bonnaz, c. 5, § 2–3, p. 38; 'Chronica Adefonsi Tertii', ed. by Gil Fernández, c. 7, p. 122.

⁸¹ 'Chronica Adefonsi Tertii Regis', ed. by Bonnaz, c. 6, § 2–3, pp. 41–44; 'Chronica Adefonsi Tertii', ed. Gil Fernández, c. 9, pp. 124–27.

traditions led to the equation of the Asturian Kingdom with *Spania*.⁸² Even the toponym 'Córdoba' did not necessarily designate the centre of the Muslim realm. It could also have referred to the town's Visigothic past and to the persistence of Christian structures among Muslim dominion. Several — mainly hagiographic — sources from al-Andalus indicate that living under Muslim dominion was considered dangerous, even a punishment for sinfulness. Their own situation, in comparison, was perceived as a chance to attain a deeper form of Christianity by separating from Islamic culture and religion. Remembering their origins in Córdoba in the contexts of monastic migration and reform probably allowed them to evoke these diverse meanings.⁸³

Even in the case of Heidenheim the importance of the monastery's foundation changed the monks' perceptions of the migration's causes and of the monastic space in which they lived. In her account of the pilgrimage of Wynnebald to Rome, Hugeburc was doubtless mindful of the ideal of *peregrinatio* ('pilgrimage').⁸⁴ However, the narration on the foundation of Heidenheim changed the importance of Wynnebald's pilgrimage to Rome. The foundation of Heidenheim became the focus of Wynnebald's life, and his grave symbolized the foundation of Heidenheim as the focal point of the *Vita*. To understand the changed perception of space in a broader sense we have to expand our examination of the *Vita Willibaldi* together with the *Vita Wynnebaldi*, aptly called 'Doppelbiographie'.⁸⁵ In comparing both texts it becomes obvious that in her report on Willibald's pilgrimage to the holy places in the Orient, Hugeburc was only able to record Willibald's experience of the divine revelation. However, at the graveside of Wynnebald she became an eyewitness of God's revelation.⁸⁶ This equation changed the monks' perception of space fundamentally: as a site of God's revelation, Heidenheim could be mentioned together with the places where Jesus Christ had lived.

In both Heidenheim and Samos the monks' perception of their own history was increasingly symbolized by the interpretation of space. These processes influenced their broader perceptions of the relationship between the monasteries and their social environment. It also impacted upon their perceptions of their own mobility. Even if the *Vitae* of Anglo-Saxon missionaries emphasized

⁸² Deswarte, *De la destruction à la restauration*, pp. 96–97, 155.

⁸³ Zwanzig, 'Märtyrer in Córdoba'.

⁸⁴ On this ideal in general, see Angenend, *Monachi Peregrini*.

⁸⁵ Berschin, *Biographie und Epochenstil*, pp. 18–19.

⁸⁶ Zwanzig, *Gründungsmythen fränkischer Klöster*, pp. 92–93.

the ideals of *peregrinatio* expressed by the departure of the protagonists into alien lands and their separation from their domestic social structures, we can nevertheless be confident about the importance of family connections amongst the missionaries and about their continuing contacts with the British Isles.⁸⁷ The continuing importance of family connections in the case of Heidenheim becomes obvious by the fact that the monastery was founded by the brothers Wynnebald and Willibald together and was ruled by their sister Walburga after the death of Wynnebald. Furthermore, the *Vita Wynnebaldi* informs us that the graveside of Wynnebald also was a destination for Anglo-Saxon kinsmen of Wynnebald.⁸⁸ Again, the materiality of the monastery buildings symbolized the connection between *peregrinatio* and the continuity of family bonds with England.

The gap between the ideals of *peregrinatio* and the continuing contacts of the missionaries with their family and homeland invites us to reconsider our modern perception of the migration from al-Andalus as 'escape' or 'rupture'. Monasteries like Samos — and probably also San Miguel de Escalada and Castañeda — were settled by monks from al-Andalus in several phases.⁸⁹ The famous abbot Samson of Córdoba probably wrote an epitaph remembering Abbot Ofilón of Samos, who may have returned from Samos to Córdoba.⁹⁰ Already Simonet enlisted names of Andalusian clerics visiting the Christian North temporarily.⁹¹ But obviously there was also a migration of monks from Christian Asturias to Muslim Córdoba.⁹² These are only some hints of the monastic and clerical exchanges between the Muslim and the Christian dominion in Spain and of the continuing contacts between the migrated Christians and their home country, being contradictory to modern imaginings of the nature of lordship and frontiers in the medieval Iberian Peninsula. But obviously the main aim of the sources was to stress continuity with earlier phases of monastic settlement. These efforts overlapped continuing contacts with al-Andalus.⁹³

⁸⁷ Padberg, *Heilige und Familie*.

⁸⁸ For example, Hugelburc von Heidenheim, *Vita Wynnebaldi*, c. 10, p. 114.

⁸⁹ García Lobo, 'San Miguel de Escalada'; Fernández Prada, 'Real monasterio', pp. 144–50.

⁹⁰ Arias Cuenllas, *Historia del monasterio*, p. 55.

⁹¹ Simonet, *Historia de los mozárabes*, I, 130.

⁹² Eulogius, 'Memoriale Sanctorum', lib. II., c. 7, § 1, p. 445.

⁹³ Carriedo Tejedo, 'Andalusíes en la "Gallaecia"':

The idea of a divinely inspired migration from al-Andalus with the main aim of monastic reformation was only one possible interpretation for the monks for broader processes of mobility. These processes with their deep impacts on society and lordship not only developed between Muslim and Christian dominion, but also within al-Andalus and the Christian North.⁹⁴ Furthermore, famous individuals like Bishop Odoarius and his companions, who founded several churches in Galicia, may prevent us from forgetting the importance of Christian migrations from the Orient to the Iberian Peninsula.⁹⁵ In particular, the contradictory traditions concerning Odoarius may make us aware of the importance of the idea of Christian migration from *Spania*: in an eleventh-century charter granting various ecclesiastical lands and rights, Odoarius's region of origin no longer was called *Africa*⁹⁶ but *de partibus spanie*.⁹⁷ Obviously, during this time a provenance from *Spania* seemed to be the only sensible interpretation.

Conclusions

Despite the different historical contexts of the foundation of Heidenheim and Samos, many comparisons can be made. In both cases it is assumed by modern research that the monasteries helped to reinforce the royal influence in their areas. However, this undervalues the self-perception of the migrating monastic elites, who had to integrate themselves into new social and political structures. In both cases the existing structures of lordship were reshaped by these self-perceptions. Besides the written documents the church buildings played an important role during this process. The monastic communities interpreted themselves as centres in the landscape and reinterpreted political but also religious space in their regions and localities.

The extant documents of Heidenheim and Samos allow for a secure reconstruction neither of the processes nor of the social context of their foundations. Both the hagiographic perspective of the *Vita Wynnebaldi* and the documentary tradition of Samos were selected and mutated by 'cultural memory'. The written traditions are therefore primarily informative about the self-perceptions and the external perceptions of monastic elites. They are also revealing

⁹⁴ For example, Linage Conde, *Los orígenes del monacato*, II, 311 and 320–21.

⁹⁵ Fernández Ardanaz, 'Monaquismo oriental en la Hispania'; García Moreno, 'Monjes y profecías cristianas'.

⁹⁶ Floriano Cumbreño, *Diplomática española*, I, no. 4, pp. 40–48.

⁹⁷ Soares, 'Um testemunho', p. 153.

as to how migrating elites perceived the structures of the societies into which they entered. The remembrance of monastic foundation was changed by a permanent process of social construction, not least due to the integration of the migrated elites into new structures of lordship. As can be seen in the written sources, the church buildings could become focal points of this process.

The comparison helps to interpret the documents and to examine and outline new aspects of the individual cases. However, these results also could be achieved by a comparison of monasteries in one region. Nevertheless the path chosen in this paper directs our attention to bigger research concepts. In this sense, comparison between Heidenheim and Samos reveals useful analogies between the 'Anglo-Saxon Mission' and the 'Mozarabic resettlement'. The importance of the memories of migration⁹⁸ also invites us to revise basic assumptions in our research. The case of Samos makes us aware of the discontinuities within an alleged homogeneous community, and so challenges modern perceptions of a vast cultural homogeneity of Christians from al-Andalus, as expressed by several misleading modern definitions of the term 'mozarab'.⁹⁹ Different approaches to monastic norms rather than cultural differences provoked the tensions at Samos. Therefore, older debates as to the role of monks from al-Andalus concerning the spread of the *Regula Benedicti* do not go far enough: the Andalusian monks neither continued solely Visigothic ideals,¹⁰⁰ nor were they the most important protagonists for the spread of Benedictine practice.¹⁰¹

The awareness of the heterogeneity of monastic groups migrating from al-Andalus also opens new perspectives on the Anglo-Saxon migration. Without doubt, there existed very dense bonds between the Anglo-Saxon communities, characterized by the integrating function of Boniface both during his lifetime and as a saint after his death.¹⁰² The different phases of the composition of the *Vita Wynnebaldi* may also be explained by conflicts within the clergy of Eichstätt, and also within the community of Heidenheim. After the death of Wynnebald, his sister Walburga became the head of this double monastery. This was in keeping with Anglo-Saxon practice,¹⁰³ but obviously it met

⁹⁸ Termed 'migrationisms' by Kleinschmidt, *Migration und Identität*.

⁹⁹ Maser, 'Die Mozaraber'.

¹⁰⁰ Cocheril, *Études sur le monachisme*, pp. 22, 30.

¹⁰¹ Linage Conde, *Los orígenes del monacato*, 1, 444–57.

¹⁰² Kehl, *Kult und Nachleben*.

¹⁰³ Baltrusch-Schneider, 'Die angelsächsischen'.

with opposition due to both the increasingly severe ideals of monastic enclosure within Carolingian society¹⁰⁴ and the loss of importance of contemporary female communities.¹⁰⁵ These conflicts emerged during the lifetime of the Anglo-Saxon bishop Willibald, but even the conflicts in the communities of Fulda¹⁰⁶ or Würzburg¹⁰⁷ are examples of the differentiation of self-perceptions among groups which aimed to continue Anglo-Saxon traditions.

The comparison of disparate cultural phenomena encourages critical reflection on modern categories of research, which can manifest themselves in static models of culture and civilization.¹⁰⁸ The remarkable similarities between different monastic foundations suggested here challenge modern research traditions that postulate homogeneous cultural identities of person groups or particular national developments ('Sonderwege').

¹⁰⁴ Zwanzig, *Gründungsmythen fränkischer Klöster*, pp. 103–04; see also Schulenburg, 'Women's Monastic Communities', p. 278.

¹⁰⁵ Muschiol, 'Zeit und Raum', p. 42.

¹⁰⁶ Patzold, 'Konflikte im Kloster', pp. 75–91.

¹⁰⁷ Wendehorst, *Germania Sacra*, p. 31.

¹⁰⁸ For example, Höfert, 'Anmerkungen zum Konzept', p. 22.

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CHURCHES AND LORDSHIP IN WESTERN NORMANDY, AD 800–1200

David Petts*

Introduction

In recent years, it is increasingly clear that much of north-western Europe underwent a similar process of ecclesiastical development during the latter half of the first millennium AD. The initial irregular establishment of monasteries with a greater or lesser degree of pastoral responsibility evolved into a more formalized and consistent network of mother churches.¹ Simultaneously, burial rites were initially not strictly controlled, with Christian burials often occurring outside formally designated cemeteries, but with a general move to an increasingly structured provision of Christian burial ground. This was followed by a later phase which saw the development of churches connected to local forms of lordship, often emerging initially in the interstices of the existing network of mother churches or arising out of the dismantling of the mother churches and their estates.² It is this final network of more localized churches

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¹ Zadora-Rio, 'The Making of Churchyards'; Blair, 'Introduction: Minster to Parish Church'; Blair, 'Ecclesiastical Organisation and Pastoral Care'; Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, pp. 162–63; Davies, 'Priests and Rural Communities'; Petts, *The Early Medieval Church in Wales*, pp. 157–97; Wood, *The Proprietary Church*.

² For example, Fossier, *Enfance de l'Europe*, p. 346; McClain, 'Local Churches and the Conquest of the North'.

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landscape of central and eastern Normandy. This marginal location means that the range of evidence available for the study of early Christianity between late antiquity and the twelfth century is very different from that found in neighbouring regions. In general, Normandy lacks the extensive documentary record, particularly charters, found in Anglo-Saxon England, with the dukes only really issuing charters to any extent from the early eleventh century.⁴ The majority of these were mainly concerned with the geographical heartland of the Duchy along the Seine Valley; fewer are concerned with Lower Normandy, and fewer still with the region to the west of the river Vire. There are a small number of passing references to this region in other documents, such as the early Norman histories and the occasional saints' *Lives*, but in general, the early history of the Cotentin is poorly documented (see below).

There is also a general lack of pre-Romanesque architecture: it is not entirely absent, and recent work is starting to recognize more examples (see below), but once again the evidence is limited compared with further east and south.⁵ There is also a range of other, more strictly archaeological evidence and indicators that can be used to begin to identify the spread and extent of pre-twelfth-century ecclesiastical sites. Although reference will inevitably be made to the architectural and art-historical significance of this material, for the purposes of this study, its importance can primarily be found in the significance this data has for understanding the relationship between the church building and the advent of Norman lordship in the western marches of Normandy. Given that although the Normans assumed control of this area in the early tenth century, there was clearly a major period of settlement from the mid- to late eleventh century.⁶ This French case study provides a valuable opportunity to take a sideways glance at how the arrival of new Norman lords impacted on the landscape of churches at a local level. This is in contrast to perspectives that focus on the process of patronage and investment in higher-level ecclesiastical establishments such as abbeys. There is also an obvious potential for providing a counterpoint to the process of the assertion of Norman political control in England at a broadly similar period.⁷

⁴ Bates, *Normandy before 1066*, pp. xii–xiv.

⁵ Baylé, 'Traditions d'ateliers'.

⁶ Bates, *Normandy before 1066*.

⁷ Cf. McClain, 'Local Churches and the Conquest of the North'; O'Sullivan, 'Normanising the North'.

Western Normandy, Fifth–Twelfth Centuries: A Brief Overview

Historical Context

Normandy had no coherent existence until the formal cession of this area of north-west Neustria to its de facto rulers, the Viking raiders and settlers under the leadership of Rollo in the tenth century AD. Before this point, the region scarcely figures in the documentary record. Coutances is briefly mentioned in the *History of the Franks*, when Praetextatus is exiled to an island near Coutances, most probably the Ile de Chausey, but possibly on one of the other Channel Islands.⁸ The region was certainly subdivided into *pagi*.⁹ There is also at least one mid-eighth-century textual attestation to a count,¹⁰ although the extent of his control is not clear; the same text also makes reference to local *vir illustri*, indicating at least some degree of regional and local lordship.

Viking raids commenced on Normandy in the first quarter of the ninth century, with initial settlement taking place around the mouth of the Seine.¹¹ The process of accommodation with the Scandinavian groups marks a key point in the conflict between Carolingian kings and Viking raiders that took place across northern Gaul, including western Normandy and Brittany.

The initial grant of land to Rollo (Hrólf) by the Carolingian king Charles the Bald in the Treaty of St Clair-sur-Epte in 911 centred on land in the lower Seine valley around Rouen. However, the Cotentin and Avranchin had been granted initially to the Bretons by Charles as early as 867, and stood as a Breton march and a buffer against the burgeoning Viking influence to its west. Lower Normandy did not finally enter Norman control until AD 933 when King Ralph granted 'the land of the Bretons situated on the sea-coast' ('terra Brittonum in ora maritime sita') to William Longsword. However, Rollo was not the only Viking leader, and it is clear that there was already some Viking occupation in this newly acquired western area. The intensity of Viking settlement clearly varied across Normandy; on the basis of place names the areas of most extensive settlement appears to have been the northern Cotentin and around the mouth of the Seine (the *pagi* of Talou, Caux, Roumois, and Evrecin). It was only in the

⁸ Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, V.8.

⁹ The Merovingian realms were divided into territorial units known as *pagi*, usually notionally controlled by a count (*comes*).

¹⁰ *Gesta*, 10.2.

¹¹ Renaud, 'The Duchy of Normandy'; Le Maho 'Les premières installations normandes', pp. 153–67.

eleventh century that the dukes of Normandy appear to have finally extended their control in a practical way over their western territories and the previously independent Viking groups on the Cotentin.

Despite the apocalyptic picture painted by early historians of Normandy, such as Dudo of St Quentin, it is increasingly apparent that the formalized assumption of control of Normandy by Rollo and his allies saw significant institutional continuity, with the survival of many Carolingian structures, although there are hints of the influence of Scandinavian law codes surviving in Norman customary law.¹²

The only region where there may have been more significant disruption is the far north of the peninsula. There is a later (twelfth-century) reference to a 'king of Cherbourg' and evidence for the refortification of a later prehistoric dyke-system cutting off the north-western tip of the peninsula.¹³ Evidence for Scandinavian place names is also far more extensive, with many topographical features, particularly along the coast, having Norse elements.¹⁴

Unlike in Upper Normandy, the Carolingian administrative system does not appear to have survived in Lower Normandy, particularly in the Cotentin. Three of the known *pagi* have Scandinavian names (*Haga*, *Sarnes*, and *Helganes*).¹⁵ There is also a possible Viking *thing* site identified on place-name evidence from close to Beaumont Hague, which may indicate the replacement of Carolingian administrative structures with ones derived from Scandinavian areas.¹⁶

Christianity and the Cotentin

The process of the initial conversion of the Cotentin peninsula is poorly understood. Like many of the dioceses of north-western Gaul, the ecclesiastical structure is likely to have had its origins in the late Roman period.¹⁷ Coutances, the *civitas* capital, had a bishop, Leontianus, attested attending the Council of Orleans in 511. It is likely that the see of Coutances was the latest to be established in *Lugdunum Secunda*, and it is possible that it was originally part of the

¹² Renaud, 'The Duchy of Normandy', pp. 455–56; Neveux, 'L'héritage des Vikings'.

¹³ De Boüard, 'Nouvelles fouilles autour du baptistère'.

¹⁴ Fellows-Jensen, 'Scandinavian Place-Names'.

¹⁵ Fauroux, *Recueil des actes*, no. 58, pp. 180–82.

¹⁶ Renaud and Ridel, 'Le Tingland'.

¹⁷ Pearce, 'Processes of Conversion'.

diocese of Bayeux.¹⁸ Later bishops, such as Romachar who oversaw the funeral of Praetextatus, are occasionally mentioned in the documentary sources.¹⁹

Whilst the use of parochial dedications to write ecclesiastical history is notoriously problematic, the north of the Cotentin has multiple dedications to Germanus of Auxerre,²⁰ and the region clearly lay within the broader northern Gaulish ambit of early figures such as Victricius and Germanus. It is also important to remember that in the late Roman period, this region was also part of the cross-Channel Saxon shore command (*Littus Saxonicus*) under the command of the *dux* Tractus Armoricanus et Nervicanus and thus may also have had links, military, socio-political, and religious, with southern England. The importance of this part of western Gaul's links with the wider cross-Channel and Atlantic seaways are later attested by links with the early Irish Church, most notably in the seventh century via the influence of Columbanus.²¹ This may again also be seen in the presence of parochial dedications, although in western Normandy at least, these may also reflect Breton influence.²²

The disruption caused by the advent of Viking raiding and settlement was extensive and clearly disruptive enough to impact on the ecclesiastical structure to some extent. There were raids on major religious centres: Baltfride, Bishop of Bayeux, was killed in his cathedral, and the Bishops of Coutances, Avranches, and Sées sought refuge in Rouen.²³

However, it is less clear the extent to which this impacted on the smaller ecclesiastical sites in the region.²⁴ Indeed, the extent to which Viking raiding caused a fundamental rupture of the Church network in north-west Normandy or merely effected a policy of retreat on the top levels of the Church hierarchy is one of the underlying questions of this paper. Herbert, Bishop of Coutances, got as far as St Lô from Rouen, and the cathedral at Coutances was rebuilt *c.* 1030 by Gunnor, widow of Richard I. However, the first bishop to take up residence again in Coutances was Herbert's successor Geoffrey of Montbray, who was made bishop in 1049.²⁵ Whilst it is generally stated that western Normandy

¹⁸ Jarry, 'Les débuts du Christianisme', pp. 118–19.

¹⁹ Gregory of Tours, *History Of The Franks*, VIII.31.

²⁰ Jacqueline, 'Les hagio-toponymes Auxerrois'.

²¹ Picard, 'L'Irlande et la Normandie'.

²² Picard, 'Les saints Irlandais en Normandie'.

²³ *Annales Bertiniani*, p. 52; Bates, *Normandy before 1066*, p. 11.

²⁴ Neveux, 'L'héritage des Vikings'.

²⁵ Le Patourel, 'Geoffrey of Montbray', pp. 134–35.

was thoroughly de-Christianized ('une véritable dé christianization'),²⁶ this is far from proved and there is equally a notable lack of clear evidence for Viking paganism in the area. There is a possible boat burial at Reville (Quettehou), but caution needs to be exercised in reading religious belief directly from burial practices.²⁷ It is noticeable that a number of place names from western Normandy show that Viking settlers were recognizing the presence of churches and incorporating them into new Scandinavian settlement names. The best example is of course Querqueville (Cherbourg-Octeville) (<*kirkja* 'church' + *villa*) (which has parallels with the two Criquevilles from Calvados) and Carquebut (Saint Mère-Église) (<*kirkja* 'church' + *býr* 'village'), although it is possible that in some cases the primary element may represent *kriki* (creek).²⁸

Recognizing the Pre-Viking Church

Documentary Evidence

Documentary evidence from the west of Normandy is very limited, partly due to the probable disturbances caused by the initial Viking invasions, and also due to the relatively late colonization of the region by the dukes of Normandy, which meant that the charter horizon does not commence until the eleventh century. There is, however, a limited amount of hagiographical material that indicated some pre-Viking monastic sites.

At the very southern edge of the Diocese of Coutances beyond the Cotentin itself, Saint-Pair-sur-Mer is almost certainly *Sesciacus*, the site of a monastery founded by Paternus, as recorded in the late sixth-century *Vita Paterni* written by Venantius Fortunatus. There is also an inscription of probable Carolingian date recording the death of Dedila, the abbess, indicating that the community at Saint-Pair was either a convent or a double-house.²⁹ Later charter evidence also refers to the *abbatial S. Paterni*.³⁰

Off the eastern coast, the Îles Saint-Marcouf were probably the site of a hermitage built by Marcouf.³¹ His *Vita* records the granting of an estate at *Nantus* (Saint-Marcouf), which lies on the mainland opposite the isles, and the *Vita*

²⁶ Neveux, 'L'héritage des Vikings', pp. 114–15.

²⁷ Renaud, *Les Vikings et la Normandie*, pp. 120–23.

²⁸ Lesley Abrams, pers. comm.

²⁹ Favreau and Michaud, *Corpus des Inscriptions*, no. 22, p. 125.

³⁰ Fauroux, *Recueil des actes*, no. 49, p. 161.

³¹ Musset, 'Essai sur l'ancien monachisme insulaire'.

S. Audoeni records an Abbot Bernuin associated with this site in the seventh century.³² Most of Marcouf's relics were translated to Corbeny in 906 in the face of Viking raids.³³ Although never re-established as a monastery, the church at Saint-Marcouf contains one of the few Romanesque crypts in Manche, and it is possible that it was used for the veneration of some relics that remained at the site. A wooden chapel on the island is mentioned in a late eleventh-century fragment of history from Fécamp.³⁴

The other site with a Romanesque crypt is the church at Orval. It is generally accepted that this is the site of a monastery founded by Potentinus, a disciple of Columbanus, referred to in the *Vita Columbani*,³⁵ which describes the foundation of a monastery 'in suburban Constantiae civitatis'; Orval lies just two miles to the south of the city. Although there is no direct material evidence for remains of pre-tenth-century activity at the site, the presence of a Romanesque crypt does appear to indicate that, as at Saint-Marcouf, important relics were venerated at the site by the eleventh or twelfth century.

A further site with documentary evidence is Portbail, twenty miles up the western coast of the Cotentin from Orval. This was clearly an important ecclesiastical site from the Merovingian period onwards. It first appears in the documentary record under the year 738, in the *Gesta* of the Abbey of Saint-Wandrille in the context of a story about the miraculous appearance of a collection of relics from the sea, where it is noted that the settlement was an *emporium*, although there is no direct archaeological evidence for the chronology and development of this site in this period.³⁶ However, the abbey appears not to have survived ninth-century Viking incursions, and the dowry of Adele, wife of Richard III, dating to 1027 records simply that it had once been an abbey ('abbatiam nec nonque appellatur Portus Bahil').³⁷ Portbail has also produced some of the most extensive archaeological and architectural evidence for early medieval Christianity from the region. This can be seen most spectacularly in the discovery of a hexagonal baptistery of fifth- or sixth-century AD date,³⁸

³² *Vita Sancti Audoeni*, p. 125.

³³ Van Houts, *The Normans in Europe*, p. 24.

³⁴ Jarry, 'Les débuts du Christianisme', p. 129.

³⁵ Musset, 'Orval: Église paroissiale Sainte-Hélène'.

³⁶ *Gesta*, 10.2–3.

³⁷ Fauroux, *Recueil des actes*, no. 58, p. 182.

³⁸ De Boüard 'Nouvelles fouilles autour du baptistère de Port-Bail'; Pilet-Lemière, 'Portbail, Baptistère'.

which in the seventh century was converted to use as a mortuary chapel. The site was clearly important in Roman times, and excavations on the Chapelle de Notre-Dame to the south-east of the baptistery revealed traces of a Roman hypocaust suggesting that there was probably a Roman settlement from which the early medieval site developed. However, it is difficult to understand the nature of the ecclesiastical site here; the baptistery might indicate the presence of a bishop, although the only attested see in the region is at Coutances. It is possible that Portbail may have acted as a harbour for Roman and early medieval Coutances, although there are several good harbours, such as Regneville and Agon at the mouth of the river Sienne, far nearer to Coutances.

The narrative connected to the miraculous appearance of the relics goes on to describe their relocation to Brix (Valogne). It then records that three churches were built there: a basilica in honour of St George, constructed by Rhiwin (although the local *vir illustris* had initially hoped he would build it) as well as one in honour of Mary and another in honour of the Holy Cross.³⁹ Once again, whatever status this site had in the pre-Viking era, it lost and became a normal parish church.

Material Evidence for Pre-Viking Christianity

The limited documentary evidence thus suggests a thin scattering of mostly monastic sites. However, it is important to move beyond the limits of the textual sources and use other forms of evidence to try and identify potential ecclesiastical sites of pre-Viking date. One probable indicator of an early ecclesiastical site is the presence of more than one church at a particular location. The presence of multiple churches at early medieval ecclesiastical sites is widely attested in Merovingian France and its neighbours,⁴⁰ so it is not surprising to find examples in the Cotentin. As noted above, the textual sources refer to the construction of three churches at Brix, and the archaeological evidence suggests several churches within the poorly understood complex at Portbail. However, there are a number of cases where sites without documentary evidence of an early date have several churches situated closely together. At Querqueville near Cherbourg, the early chapel of Saint-Germain stands just to the north of the main parish church on a hilltop location commanding impressive views over the harbour at Cherbourg. Excavation suggests that this small structure

³⁹ *Gesta*, 10.3.

⁴⁰ Blair, 'Anglo-Saxon Minsters'; Petts and Turner, 'Early Medieval Church Groups'.



Figure 9.1.
Chapelle de Saint-Germain, Querqueville, built
in the seventh century AD and extended in the
tenth century AD. Photograph by the author.

dates to the seventh century, although it was extended in the later ninth or tenth century (Figure 9.1).⁴¹ To the east, at Gatteville (St Pierre-Eglise), the small twelfth-century Chapelle de Marins stands in the centre of the village outside the churchyard to the north of the main church. The early nineteenth-century cadastral (taxation) maps suggest that they were both, however, within a larger enclosure, and archaeological excavation around the Chapelle in the 1960s exposed human burials believed to be of Merovingian date.⁴² At Moitiers d'Allonne (Barneville-Carteret), the churches of St Pierre and Notre Dame stood adjacent within the same churchyard, and at Fresville (Montebourg) the chapel of Saint-Sulpice stands to the side of the parish church — although the

⁴¹ Dold, 'La chapelle Saint-Germain de Querqueville'; Pilet-Lemière, 'Querqueville: Chapelle Saint-Germain'.

⁴² Sorel and Sorel, 'Gatteville-en-Cotentin'.

current structure is probably sixteenth century in date, its size, and the rarity of such cemetery chapels, means that this must also be considered as another possible example of a church group. Similar groupings of churches can be found immediately to the south of the study area in the Diocese of Avranches. For example, a small chapel dedicated to St Medard stood to the south of the parish church (Notre Dame) at Genêts (Sartilly) until the eighteenth century.⁴³

Burial Evidence

A number of later churches in western Normandy have also produced evidence for pre-Viking burial. This need not be indicative of a church of an early date; it may merely demonstrate the presence of a cemetery. Nonetheless, it is certainly an indicator of some level of continuity between pre- and post-Viking sites. The evidence comes in a number of forms: archaeological evidence for burial goods found within later medieval graveyards, the presence of stone sarcophagi of probably pre-Viking date, and a limited amount of epigraphic evidence.

As far as artefactual evidence is concerned, in some cases, such as at Beaumont-Hague (Beaumont-Hague), where an inhumation with two decorated bronze buckles was found in 1837, the objects were found alongside a burial.⁴⁴ A similar situation occurs at Vesly (La Haye de Puits), where a number of tufa coffins were reported during building work beneath the side wall of the nave, one containing a belt buckle decorated with interlace, as well as at Sainte-Croix Hague (Beaumont-Hague), where a tufa stone coffin containing a bronze brooch decorated with interlace was found.⁴⁵

Sarcophagi are not always easy to date, particularly when recorded as antiquarian observations, although one or more probable early sarcophagi are known from the cemeteries at Flottemanville-Hague (Beaumont).⁴⁶ A sarcophagus of a form similar to that preserved at Vesly and found in association with early grave goods can be seen in the church in Montchaton (Montmartin). Less securely datable are the stone sarcophagi from Pirou (Lessay), Le Ham (Montebourg), and Doville (La Haye de Puits).⁴⁷ At Lieusaint (Valognes) the church appears to have been located above or near a Roman cemetery, and a

⁴³ Levalet, *Avranches et le cite des Abrincates*, pp. 201–03, fig. 203.

⁴⁴ De Gerville, *Études géographiques et historiques*, p. 86.

⁴⁵ Pilet-Lemière and Levalet, *Carte archéologique*, p. 34.

⁴⁶ Pilet-Lemière and Levalet, *Carte archéologique*, p. 33.

⁴⁷ Pilet-Lemière and Levalet, *Carte archéologique*.

number of Roman burials were located in the vicinity, including at least one very elaborate lead coffin. Merovingian period burials were also found, including one which incorporated part of a Roman column at its head; this was inscribed with the name *Sunnovira*.⁴⁸

The burial evidence is also useful in providing an insight into the changing size of cemeteries, a common feature in early medieval graveyards, which are often seen to contract over time.⁴⁹ The burial noted above from Sainte-Croix Hague was found close to, but outside, the modern churchyard.⁵⁰ A similar situation is known from Saint-Marcouf, a site already highlighted as a potential early ecclesiastical site, where two stone coffins were found near the presbytery.⁵¹

Few Merovingian burial sites not associated with ecclesiastical sites are known from Manche, the exception being a small group of twenty-four burials from close to the beach at Siouville-Hague.⁵² There are other burials which may be early, but are undateable without further information, such as the group of seventeen burials in stone cists from Hardinvast (Octeville).⁵³ The lack of grave goods associated with these cemeteries does suggest that, as elsewhere in northern Europe, some small cemeteries of probably Christian burials were established and did not ultimately develop into churches.⁵⁴

The most spectacular epigraphic evidence comes from Ham (Montebourg) where an altar carries an inscription giving the date 679 and indicating the presence of a female community. Wace records the destruction of the site by the Vikings, and again the abbey is not refounded.⁵⁵ Less spectacular is the small funerary inscription known from Couville (Octeville); a stone coffin was accompanied by a slate plaque with the inscription *Bertowi/nus (h)ic r(equiescit)*, dated by LeBlant to the seventh century.⁵⁶ Stylistically, this plaque has strong similarities with other small inscriptions accompanying burials known from eastern Brittany, most obviously at Bourg Saint-Pair (Bais), but

⁴⁸ De Caumont, 'Note sur un cercueil Gallo-Roman'.

⁴⁹ Zadora-Rio, 'The Making of Churchyards', pp. 13–16.

⁵⁰ Pilet-Lemière and Levalet, *Carte archéologique*, p. 34.

⁵¹ De Pontaumont, *Histoire de l'ancienne élection de Carentan*.

⁵² Pilet-Lemière and Levalet, *Carte archéologique*, p. 77.

⁵³ Voisin, 'Inventaire des découverts', pp. 7 and 43.

⁵⁴ Zadora-Rio, 'The Making of Churchyards'.

⁵⁵ Favreau and Michaud, *Corpus des Inscriptions*, no. 22, p. 114.

⁵⁶ LeBlant, *Inscriptions chrétiennes*, p. 180 and pl. 13 no. 60.

also Retiers and Visseiche (all Ille-et-Vilaine),⁵⁷ and as such are strong reminders of the Breton influence in this part of western Normandy. Finally, as already noted, the name Sunnovira was carved onto a reused Roman column fragment placed at the head of a probably early medieval sarcophagus.⁵⁸

The evidence for pre-Viking Christianity is certainly thin and derived from poor and patchy evidence, and should certainly be seen as a minimum distribution, with a likelihood that other sites are not recorded. However, even given this, it can be seen that the ecclesiastical provision — whilst widespread — was never dense (see Map 9.1). It appears to have been mostly monastic, although Coutances and potentially Portbail may have had episcopal functions. It is difficult to discern any clear chronological development; Coutances clearly has its origins as a late antique see, while the others probably belong to the seventh and eighth centuries AD, but beyond this, little chronological precision is possible.

Ninth- to Tenth-Century Ecclesiastical Provision

The traditional narrative has it that the advent of Viking raiding and consequent settling from the later ninth century onwards had a devastating impact on Christianity in the region, with the Church only becoming re-established to any extent in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, a process reflected in the evidence for extensive church building in the twelfth century (see below). However, this assumption needs to be critically assessed. Again there are two broad categories of evidence: the slowly building charter tradition that begins to have relevance to this region from the very late tenth century, and the slight and difficult to interpret architectural evidence.

The earliest Norman charter to have bearing on the extent of churches in the region records Richard II's dowry for his wife Judith (dating 996–1008).⁵⁹ It refers to a group of thirty-eight estates in the *pagi Kelgenas* in central Cotentin; it also grants seventeen churches in the same region. This suggests very roughly that, in this area at least, roughly 45 per cent of estates were provided with a church. In the same charter, there are also grants of land in other parts of Normandy. A group of thirty-one estates in the Cinglais, to the south of Caen, were granted alongside fifteen churches, giving a slightly higher rate of church provision (48%), whilst a group of twenty-nine estates in the Lieuvain around the southern bank of the mouth of the Seine had a provision

⁵⁷ Davies and others, *The Inscriptions of Early Medieval Brittany*, pp. 1–4 and 6.

⁵⁸ De Caumont, 'Note sur un cercueil Gallo-Roman'.

⁵⁹ Fauroux, *Recueil des actes*, no. 11.

of twenty-one churches (72%), significantly higher than the areas granted in Lower Normandy. Even accepting the lower figure for church provision in the Cotentin, the number is still perhaps a surprise. Of the thirty-eight estates in the *pagi Kelgenas* estates, fifteen achieved parochial status by the early fourteenth century;⁶⁰ given the figure provided of seventeen churches, this suggests that the provision of churches, in this part of the Cotentin at least, was broadly the same in the late tenth century as in the fourteenth century.

This raises the important question of who was responsible for founding these churches. From this perspective, the fact that these estates were given as a comital dowry, and were presumably demesne land rather than being held by local lords, is highly significant and suggests that it was at royal rather than lordly initiative that these churches were established. This does, though, make the large assumption that they were all founded following the transfer of the territory to the Duchy of Normandy. Even reminding ourselves of the fact that the distribution of pre-Viking ecclesiastical sites is probably an underestimate, it seems unlikely that all the churches dated so early, and the only estate in the list with a known early church is Brix. Later eleventh-century charter evidence is less useful in constructing the broad pattern of the extent of churches beyond confirming the presence of a series of churches across the Cotentin.⁶¹ There is also a little epigraphic evidence, with an inscription from Lieusaint recording the deaths of the priests Hermer and Frule, dating to the early eleventh century, suggesting the presence of a small monastic community at the site (Figure 9.2).⁶²

This evidence for a high level of church provision this early has until recently appeared not to have been reflected in the architectural evidence for early churches in the region. In a recent overview Maylis Baylé observed ‘we are entirely ignorant of pre-Romanesque and proto-Romanesque architecture in the Cotentin.’⁶³ Although pre-Romanesque architecture has been recognized elsewhere in Normandy, many of the diagnostic features used to identify it, such as the architectural use of ceramic tile, are lacking in this region. Although they are found immediately to the south in the Avranchin (e.g. Mont St Michel; Ardevon; Conde-dur-Risle, Rugles) and to the east in the Pays d’Auge, is not known further north in the Cotentin.⁶⁴ This lack of visible church architecture

⁶⁰ Longnon, *Pouillés de la Province de Rouen*.

⁶¹ Fauroux, *Recueil des actes*, nos 128, 205, 214, 224, 234^v.

⁶² Favreau and Michaud, *Corpus des Inscriptions*, nos 22, 116.

⁶³ Baylé, ‘Norman Architecture around the Year 1000’, p. 532.

⁶⁴ Baylé, ‘Traditions d’ateliers’, pp. 34–36; Blain, *Les terres cuites architecturales des églises*.



Figure 9.2.
Early eleventh-century
inscription from Lieusaint,
Valognes, commemorating
priests at the church.
Photograph by the author.

has usually been explained in terms of the relatively late development of the Church structure in the region.⁶⁵

However, it is increasingly becoming clear that it is possible to discern traces of probably tenth- or eleventh-century phases of building at a series of churches across the Cotentin. Diagnostic features include the use of *opus spicatum* and a distinctive local tuf derived from Sainteny, near Carentan (Manche). In a recent survey, Julien Deshayes has suggested that pre-twelfth-century phases can be recognized at the chapel of Sainte-Erguoelfe at Surtainville (Les Pieux), the church of Saint-Ébremont at La Barre-de-Semilly (St Lô), and the churches at Orval (Montmartin-sur-Mer), Notre-Dame de Savigny (Cerisy-la-Salle), Acqueville (Beaumont-Hague), La Haye-d'Ectot (Barneville-Carteret), Derville (La Haye de Puits), Carteret (Barneville-Carteret), Portbail (Barneville-Carteret), and Moitiers-en-Bauptois (Saint-Sauveur-la-Vicomte) (Figure 9.3).⁶⁶ At Surtainville for example, the second phase of the structure can be dated to 1120–40 on the basis of the carved capitals, an earlier phase of fabric defined by *opus spicatum* with levelling courses of horizontal stone. As

⁶⁵ Baylé, 'Remarques sure les ateliers de sculpture'; Baylé, 'Les origines et les premiers développements', p. 25.

⁶⁶ Deshayes, 'Structures murales et phases de construction'.



Figure 9.3.
The church of Notre-Dame,
Portbail: northern nave wall
showing evidence of phasing,
including probable tenth- or
early eleventh-century fabric.
Photograph by the author.

well as the sites highlighted by Deshayes, it is also possible to recognize earlier phases at other churches, including at St Jean-la-Rivière (Barneville-Carteret) close to Portbail, where an area of eleventh- or twelfth-century *opus spicatum* can be seen to clearly post-date the remains of an earlier doorway (Figure 9.4).

Building on Deshayes's work, it is tentatively possible to distinguish between two distinct deployments of *opus spicatum* in Lower Normandy. The certain examples of *opus spicatum* in pre-Romanesque churches tend to take the form of solid stretches of herringbone with the occasional horizontal leveling course. This can be seen within the Cotentin in the tenth-century phases at Querqueville and just to the south in the pre-Romanesque churches of the Avranchin.⁶⁷ This use can also be seen further east in the pre-Romanesque churches of the Bessin, such as Périers-le-Dan (Ouistreham), just to the north

⁶⁷ Baylé, 'Traditions d'ateliers'; Dold, 'La chapelle Saint-Germain de Querqueville'.



Figure 9.4. Northern nave wall of the church of St Jean-la-Riviere, Barneville-Carteret, showing an earlier doorway covered by eleventh- or twelfth-century herringbone masonry. Photograph by the author.

of Caen, and Tilly-sur-Seulles (Tilly-sur-Seulles). By the twelfth century there appears to have been a change in the use of *opus spicatum*. In the Romanesque churches of the Cotentin, herringbone tends instead to be deployed primarily as levelling courses or decorative bands in walls constructed mainly of rubble or occasionally *petit appareil* (e.g. Neville-sur-Mer). Whilst the precise chronology of this change in church fabric is difficult to clarify, churches with the probable earlier form of *opus spicatum* can be seen at Les Veys (Carentan), La Feuillè (Lessay), and Joganville (Montebourg).

Whilst both the documentary and the architectural evidence is limited in scope and partial, combined they do begin to suggest that we see a significant number of churches present in the Cotentin and its hinterland by the end of the tenth century (Map 9.2). Whilst not spectacular in scale, the use of stone is clear evidence of some level of investment in the church buildings. The extent of church provision implied in charter Fauroux 11 is indicative of a well-established network of churches that by the turn of the millennium had already achieved the level of provision found at a later date. This does not sit

Map 9.2.
Map showing location
of probable and possible
tenth- and early eleventh-
century churches in
north-west Normandy.
Map by the author.



comfortably with a picture of pastoral provision that was all but destroyed by the presence of incoming Viking settlers and seems to imply some level of continuity from the pre-Viking system. Nonetheless, as might be expected, there is also evidence for a continued expansion in this provision, with the presence of tenth- or early eleventh-century churches not limited to sites picked out as locations of pre-Viking Christianity. This expansion can be seen to be occurring against a backdrop of Scandinavian settlement, although it probably post-dates the cession of the Cotentin to the dukes of Normandy. The fact that all the churches listed in Faroux 11 were on comital demesne land may well suggest that this expansion of the ecclesiastical network was carried out under the direction of the dukes of Normandy rather than at the level of local seigneurs.

Identifying Late Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century Churches

It is only in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries that there is a sudden flowering of Romanesque architecture. The Diocese of Coutances includes a number of important examples of Norman church building: the abbeys of Cerisy-la-Fôret (founded 1032) and Lessay (founded 1056) have a significant place in the development of a distinctive Norman architectural tradition.⁶⁸ It is

⁶⁸ Musset, 'De Saint Victrice à Saint Ouen', pp. 153–62 and 168–209.

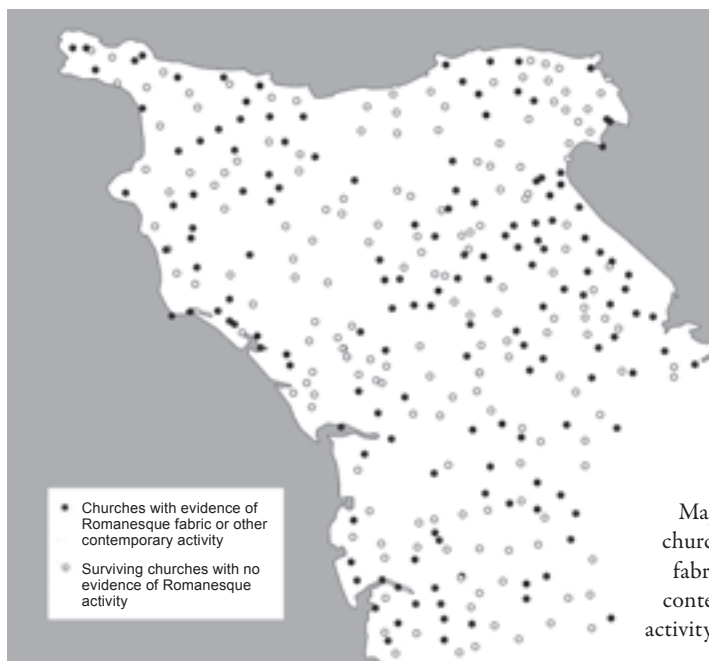
Table 9.1. Survey of Romanesque materials in churches of the Contentin.

| Canton | Total no. of churches | No. of churches with Romanesque material | % of churches with Romanesque material |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Montebourg | 22 | 13 | 59% |
| Quettehou | 17 | 7 | 41% |
| Ste Mere-Eglise | 26 | 14 | 54% |
| St Pierre-Eglise | 19 | 9 | 47% |
| Valognes | 13 | 6 | 46% |
| Tourlaville | 5 | 0 | 0% |
| St Sauveur-le-Vicomte | 19 | 9 | 47% |
| Periers | 13 | 6 | 46% |
| Lessay | 12 | 7 | 58% |
| La Hayes-de-Puits | 25 | 8 | 32% |
| Carentan | 15 | 7 | 47% |
| Barneville-Carteret | 13 | 9 | 69% |
| Beaumont-Hague | 21 | 12 | 57% |
| Briquebec | 14 | 4 | 29% |
| Cerisy-la-Salle | 11 | 4 | 36% |
| Coutances | 7 | 2 | 29% |
| Equeurdeville | 8 | 3 | 38% |
| Les Pieux | 16 | 8 | 50% |
| Montmartin | 14 | 7 | 50% |
| St Malo-de-la-Lande | 13 | 7 | 54% |
| St Sauveur-Lendelin | 12 | 5 | 42% |
| Total | 315 | 147 | 47% |

also the site of a number of excellent examples of Romanesque parish churches, such as Martinvast, Octeville, and Tollevast, where it is possible to still see more or less intact church structures, entirely of twelfth-century date.⁶⁹

However, in addition to these well-known (and generally well-preserved) examples, there is also a far more substantial but under-explored, corpus of parish churches which contain fragments and hints of Romanesque fabric or archi-

⁶⁹ Musset, 'Orval: Église paroissiale Sainte-Hélène'; Musset, 'Église Saint-Martin de Tollevast'; Musset, 'De Saint Victrice à Saint Ouen', pp. 163–64.



Map 9.3.

Map showing locations of churches with Romanesque fabric or other evidence of contemporary ecclesiastical activity in north-west France.

Map by the author.

tectural features in churches which are otherwise mainly of later date. There is also a small quantity of what might be termed 'proxy' evidence for twelfth-century activity at church sites, including Romanesque fonts and possible twelfth-century grave slabs.

In a survey of over three hundred churches in the Cotentin and its hinterland by the author, a record was kept of churches which included diagnostic Romanesque sculpture, the use of *opus spicatum*, monolithic window heads, or Romanesque fonts.

The level of chronological detail obviously varies widely; whilst architecturally elaborate doorways or decorated stone capitals give themselves to a reasonably precise dating, simple undecorated windows or stretches of herringbone do not. For the sake of this paper, they will all be allocated to the long twelfth century, although there is clearly further scope for refining this chronology.

Of the churches visited, nearly half produced some form of evidence for a broadly twelfth-century date (Table 9.1, Map 9.3). Again, it is necessary to remind ourselves that this overall figure for churches with twelfth-century features is a *minimum*. Many churches were substantially rebuilt in subsequent periods or destroyed during the World War II Normandy landings; these too may once have contained Romanesque material.

If the evidence from the late dowry of Judith (see above) and the increasing evidence for pre-Romanesque church building in north-west Normandy are indicative of a widespread network of churches by the late tenth / early eleventh century, then the evidence from the surviving church fabric seems to show a major campaign of investment in the late eleventh and twelfth centuries. This appears to have included both restoring existing churches and creating new ones. Although some of this clearly occurs at sites of pre-existing importance, such as Portbail, Orval, and Saint-Marcouf, what is noticeable is how much of the evidence for twelfth-century church building comes from small, local churches. Certainly, in some cases, it may be possible to link these phases of investment to the acquisition of a church by a monastic house or by a major landholding family, but the majority of the investment in local churches is likely to have been driven by lordship at a local level.

Attempts have been made to draw stylistic comparisons between particular churches and in some cases linking these similarities to patterns of patronage. For example, the churches at Tollevast, Octeville, and Martinvast form a distinct group in the northern Cotentin. They all have a similar plan, with rectangular nave, two-bay choir, and apsidal end — originally with a short central tower (now only surviving at Martinvast) — and comparable sculptural ornamentation. Maylis Baylé has also argued that it is possible to recognize a number of distinct schools of sculpture in the Cotentin.⁷⁰ For example, she has noted the stylistic similarities between the sculpture at Réville, Tollevast, Martinvast, Portbail, and Briquebec.⁷¹ In these cases we may be seeing underlying similarities reflecting either distinct links of patronage, with the patrons commissioning similar designs for several of their dependent churches, or alternatively, craftsmen working in a particular tradition offering their skills to a range of different clients. We might characterize the latter situation as a process of horizontal emulation, with clients of similar (generally high) social rank deliberately using work commissioned by their peers as models for their own projects. However, such studies have tended to focus on drawing stylistic links between more complex elements of architectural detailing and sculpture. This means that such patterns of influence and borrowing have mainly been traced between church buildings commissioned by wealthier patrons. By looking at less complex elements of the Romanesque architecture it may be possible to recognize lines of stylistic influence at the level of smaller churches.

⁷⁰ Baylé, 'Remarques sure les ateliers de sculpture'.

⁷¹ Baylé, 'Remarques sure les ateliers de sculpture', pp. 204–05.



Figure 9.5.
Window from Crosville
showing crude attempt
at replicating a chevron
decorated arch. Photo-
graph by the author.

This can be seen, for example, by taking a look at the variation found in the simple monolithic window heads that are a common feature of the smaller Romanesque church in western Normandy. Many are very simple with no evidence for any decoration. However, there is a small group of such window heads that have been decorated by the addition of simple incised lines mimicking the outlines of voussoirs. Examples are known from Fresville, Briqueville-la-Blouette, Feugerues, La Haye d'Ectot, Orval, Savigny, Tollevast, Hauteville-le-Guichard, and Angloville-sur-Ay. In some case, such as at Orval and Tollevast, the Romanesque churches are substantial and elaborate structures, and these windows need probably not be seen as 'cost-cutting' measures, but as stylistic features in their own right. In these cases, the simple incised lines are clearly cut and the windowhead itself well shaped. However, in other cases, at smaller churches, such as Briqueville-la-Blouette, these windows are far cruder and



Figure 9.6. Examples of cross slabs, Benoitville (Les Pieux), Manche. Photograph by the author.

appear to represent rough attempts to emulate these features known at higher-status churches — in the case of Briqueville-la-Blouette, probably the windows at Orval, which was only a mile and a half away. Another attempt to emulate more sophisticated architectural features can be found at Crosville, where a reset monolithic window head is not only decorated with incised voussoirs but also crude incised zigzags, which appear to be a rough attempt to copy typical Romanesque chevron decoration (Figure 9.5). These attempts to mimic more sophisticated window types by simply decorating monolithic window heads are a long way from the complex and highly technical sculptural techniques used on the arches and capitals of the higher-status churches of the region, but may nonetheless represent an attempt by lower levels of lordship with relatively few resources to ensure that their churches can be seen as belonging to the wider tradition of Romanesque architecture, and can be seen as prime examples of vertical emulation of regional styles. We might also see this in the widespread use of *opus spicatum* in the small twelfth-century parish churches in the Cotentin, as this was a constructional technique which was commonly found in high-status structures, such as at the abbey of Cerisy-la-Forêt.

There is also a distinct group of stone cross slabs found in churches on the western side of the Cotentin peninsula (Figure 9.6). Mainly carved from granite, these simple crosses share a distinct stylistic similarity and, unlike similar funerary monuments from Britain, are rarely accompanied by additional symbols such as swords or combs. Also unlike the British examples, which appear to have developed out of an existing late Anglo-Saxon tradition of sculptured stone slabs, these western Norman examples have no obvious predecessors.⁷² Given this, it is possible that the tradition of using these crosses actually reflects cross-Channel influence, most likely dating to the later eleventh or twelfth century. These monuments are most likely to have been commissioned by local lords, and their creation may be seen as attempts by a newly established land-holding elite to consolidate their social position through investment in funerary display. The distribution pattern of these monuments is intriguing; they are highly localized in the west of the peninsula, particularly focused around Les Pieux, although some are found as far north as the Beaumont-Hague area and as far south as the Sienne Estuary. Aleks McClain in her discussion of similar monuments in North Yorkshire has noted that there appears to be a complementary distribution between the construction of Saxo-Norman architecture, mainly found in the more central areas, and the funerary monuments which are more commonly located in the more isolated and peripheral areas of the region, where there was both less capital to invest in construction and more social stress due to the lack of a clearly enforcible central authority.⁷³ This pattern is, however, not repeated in this part of Normandy, where the main focus of such monumentality has no discernible lack of twelfth-century churches and there is nothing in the charter evidence to suggest major variations in the broad patterns of lordship and tenurial relations. This unusual cluster of monuments is all the more idiosyncratic when compared with the wider general paucity of eleventh- to thirteenth-century funerary monuments across the rest of western Normandy. This intriguing phenomenon is one deserving of further research.

Conclusions

It is time to try and place this evidence for the development of the church structure in north-western Normandy into some kind of context and address some underlying questions about both the impact of Viking settlement on the

⁷² McClain, 'Local Churches and the Conquest of the North'.

⁷³ McClain, 'Local Churches and the Conquest of the North'.

ecclesiastical provision of the region and the role of lordship in any subsequent revival of the Church.

To recapitulate, combining the textual and archaeological evidence does seem to suggest a wider network of early churches in pre-Viking Normandy than is usually recognized through studies based on documents alone. The epigraphic and archaeological evidence allows us to supplement the known monastic sites and suggests a wider, although still limited, distribution of pre-Viking churches. The evidence for a tenth- and early eleventh-century network of churches is clearly more extensive than previously appreciated. The evidence from the charter Fauroux 11 has been shown to suggest that the level of church provision by the end of the tenth century had reached its later medieval levels, even if the ratio of churches to estates was lower than was found further east in the Norman heartlands. This is difficult to square with the documentary picture of a massive destruction of the ecclesiastical network. Whilst the episcopal hierarchy may have fled, the circumstantial evidence suggests that the more regional and local network of churches was more resilient, although some of the tenth-century provision of churches may have emerged at comital behest towards the end of this period. Finally, from the mid- to late eleventh century and through the twelfth century, there was a massive flowering of stone-built churches of Romanesque style. These can be seen at all levels from major monastic foundations, to churches of regional importance, to many local churches, where churches are both built *de novo* and also extended and restored.

This pattern of the spread and consolidation of church provision through the later first millennium AD and the early centuries of the second millennium AD cannot be seen as a simple evolutionary process, as in the four hundred years between 800 and 1200 the region undergoes two major disruptions: first the initial impact of Viking raiding and informal colonization in the ninth century, and then in the eleventh century the secondary impact of Vikings via the expansion of Norman power. There is also the unquantifiable impact of the temporary cession of the region to Breton control in the tenth century.

At the heart of this is the question of the role of local lordship in the maintenance and expansion of the church network. From as early as the eighth century, the documentary record of the establishment of the churches at Brix suggests that local lords had the ability and desire to invest in churches, even if in that particular situation he was 'gazumped' by a more senior figure. The role of senior lordship in church construction may be implied in the dowry of Judith. However, the best evidence for the involvement of major landowners in church construction is through the (re)foundation of monastic sites, such as Cerisy-la-Fôret and Lessay. Indeed, it is these foundations which show the earliest invest-

ment in Romanesque architecture commencing in the mid-eleventh century. We may see here an identification of Romanesque style architecture with the emergence of a new, distinctively Norman elite, constructing and embedding their power and influence through not only exerting territorial control over the region, but also by the spread of a new architectural idiom.

Although the chronological evidence for the investment in church building at a local level is not easy to clarify, the earliest Romanesque work from the Cotentin does clearly date to as early as the 1050s–1060s whilst the majority of the construction (or more likely reconstruction) of local churches appears to sit more firmly in the 1100s. Up until around 1066 lower Normandy was undergoing what David Bates has called an ‘Upper Norman colonization’,⁷⁴ with an increased emergence of Norman lordship in the Diocese of Coutances. This resulted in erosion of ducal demesne land and the emergence of a new level of local territorial lords, who appear to have provided the investment and support for this new phase of church construction. It seems likely that much of the investment in local churches was done by local lords rather than more powerful regional magnates. For example, St Christophe-du-Foc (Les Pieux), which was one of the estates first recorded in the dowry of Judith at the turn of the millennium, falls into the hands of the Tosny family in broadly 1010–20. It was then passed to the royal butler Hugh around 1080.⁷⁵ The church contains a twelfth-century font and fragments of cross slab built into the fabric. It is probable that these relate to investment by Hugh or his representatives on the ground. Although both were working in the same broad Romanesque idiom, and although the sparse documentary evidence often makes it difficult to distinguish the precise patterns of tenure, it has been suggested by Maylis Baylé that it is possible to identify certain regional schools in terms of sculptural style. It is not easy to map these schools onto precise high-level networks of patronage, and they may well instead represent groups of craftsmen working across the region and being commissioned on an ad hoc basis by local lords. Although other possible stylistic zones and influences have been noted above, there is still a need to more closely investigate whether these represent a patron favouring a particular style in a series of buildings which they have commissioned, or less structured patterns of stylistic borrowing and architectural emulation.

The underlying reasons for this sudden expansion in the (re)construction of local churches in the eleventh century are complex and undoubtedly reflect

⁷⁴ Bates, *Normandy before 1066*, p. 103.

⁷⁵ Musset, ‘Aux Origines’, pp. 72–73.

international, regional, and local trends. At an international scale, the situation in western Normandy can clearly be seen as part of a wider upsurge in church construction in this period.⁷⁶ It is clear that it is partly due to important transformations in the patterns of local power found across much of Western Europe at this period. Robert Fossier and others have characterized this period as one of *encellulement*, which saw patterns of regional lordship and its associated ecclesiastical provision fracturing and devolving to a more localized network of territorial lordship centred on the manor.⁷⁷ The establishment of churches alongside manorial centres is a common phenomenon through much of Europe at this period. It is important, though, to be alive to the charter evidence from western Normandy that reminds us that many estates were probably provided with local churches by the end of the tenth century and there need be no easy correlation between the local churches and local lords. At a local level, the flowering of church construction can be seen to be broadly contemporary to the spread and consolidation of Norman control in Lower Normandy. The advent of a new, intrusive group of lords undoubtedly required a range of social, military, and symbolic legitimization strategies. The construction of new churches in a pan-Romanesque style can certainly be seen as part of this. Equally, the appearance of cross slabs, most likely as burial monuments for both secular and ecclesiastical figures, represents a new level of investment in the burial of the dead. The intriguing uniformity in their design may imply the creation of some level of regional shared identity by the lords who commissioned and used these monuments.

There is an obvious difficulty in refining the chronology of church building in the long twelfth century. There may be some scope for improving the chronology of church construction which would allow us to potentially identify whether the investment in churches was being carried out by the first, second, or even third generation of this new incoming level of lordship. There is also ample scope for exploring the spatial dimension of the new arrival of lordship, through addressing the evidence for the relationship between new churches and possible manorial sites. There is clearly great variation in this relationship. For example at Vrasville (St Pierre-Église) the church is clearly juxtaposed with a small motte sitting together in a rectangular enclosure, whereas to the west of Cherbourg in the Beaumont-Hague region, there are a series of churches in circular, hilltop enclosures, often at some distance from the villages they serve. This distinction

⁷⁶ Hiscock, *The White Mantle of Churches*.

⁷⁷ Fossier, *Enfance de l'Europe*.

between circular and rectangular enclosures is one that is found across the study area, and if churches are seen as just one component in the regionally diverse pattern of settlement planning, there is scope for exploring the extent to which it is possible to draw out and further interpret such distinctions.

In conclusion, the pattern of church building in western Normandy when viewed from an archaeological and architectural perspective does provide a very different picture than that provided simply by interrogating the documentary sources. In every period examined, there is clearly more evidence for church provision than previously identified. The number of pre-Viking churches, although not extensive, does suggest that, as elsewhere in Europe, the region had a network of what might be interpreted as 'mother churches' resulting in some level of ecclesiastical provision across most of the northern half of the Diocese of Coutances. The far denser distribution of churches in the ninth and tenth centuries than hitherto appreciated also has significant implications, suggesting that the traditional image of a church network destroyed by the impact of Viking raiding actually survived largely intact and then expanded rapidly. Whilst the bishops of Coutances did not return to their episcopal seat until the mid-eleventh century, the local network of churches was seemingly already well established by this point. This mesh of key loci of social power mediated through investment in religious architecture formed a key facet of the development of local lordship. As places where different scales of investment in the Church were materialized, these new structures were far more than simply a reflection of an increasingly powerful and confident Church, embedding itself in the new resolving territorial arrangements of eleventh- and twelfth-century western Normandy. Instead, they themselves were central to the expression of differing levels of local power that was coalescing at this period, transcending the traditional distinction between secular and religious, and producing new nodes of power where the temporal and spiritual confronted each other and forged new modes of representing symbolic power.

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Part III

Churches in Landscapes of Power

EARLY MEDIEVAL RELIGION AND SOCIAL POWER: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF RURAL ELITES AND CHURCH BUILDING IN NORTHERN FRANCE AND SOUTHERN SCANDINAVIA

Anne Nissen*

So it was as though the very world had shaken herself
and cast off her old age, and were clothing herself every-
where in a white garment of churches.

— Ralph Glaber (d. 1047)¹

Introduction: Secular and Religious Power in the Medieval Landscape

‘The white garment of churches’ of the Burgundinian monk Ralph Glaber is cited here to underscore the large-scale building of rural churches *c.* 1000 and to argue for the departure of a new era. This sentence has been used to draw attention to the religious components of the so-called ‘Feudal Revolution’ where local lords appear as the principal actors in the shaping of a new rural economy. The making of the medieval village has been highlighted in outstanding

* A warm thanks to Michael Shapland and José Carlos Sánchez-Pardo for their comments on the manuscript and for helping with the English corrections. All lacks and faults are my whole responsibility.

¹ ‘Ralph Glaber: On the First Millenium’, <<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/glaber-1000.asp>> [accessed 6 October 2014].

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regional studies by Robert Fossier in Picardy,² Pierre Bonnassie in Catalonia,³ and Pierre Toubert in *Latium* in central Italy.⁴ All of them highlighted the decisive impact of local lords and rural churches in the shaping of the nucleated village c. AD 1000. Pierre Toubert introduced the term *incastellamento* to qualify the settlement shift to fortified hilltop sites, in which local lords had a significant role. Although *incastellamento* stresses the military aspect of nucleated settlement, Toubert also draw attention to local churches in the shaping of nucleated settlements on the hilltops. Robert Fossier coined the term *encellulement* in order to draw a parallel with *incastellamento*, as part of his study of the emergence of nucleated settlements in the plain of Picardy.⁵ This topic appeared in renowned historical overviews of the medieval West, notably those of Georges Duby and Robert Fossier.⁶

The castle and the church were pointed out as the twin foci of the fully developed medieval village, whereas the small and poor early medieval rural settlements lacked any intelligible spatial organization. These comparisons were formulated before the spectacular development of large-scale rural excavations in the framework of preventive archaeology. Nevertheless, the paradigm of *la Mutation de l'an Mil* has weighed heavily not only in France, but also in the Mediterranean area and more widely in post-Roman Europe, which has long regarded the early Middle Ages as a dark age between Roman and 'Romanesque' civilization.

With regards to the local churches, a less-frequently cited sentence of Ralph Glaber suggests that they already were very numerous at the end of the first millennium: 'especially in Italy and Gaul, [...] churches were *rebuilt*, many of these were still seemly and needed no such care'.⁷ More recently, Michel Lauwers introduced the term *inecclesiamento* to emphasize the importance of churches and cemeteries in the establishment of villages. The changing focus from the castle to the church is indebted to important archaeological research on the relationship between parochial cemeteries and their settlements.⁸ Whereas the *incastellamento* has been related to a rapid feudal revolution, the *inecclesia-*

² Fossier, *La terre et les hommes*.

³ Bonnassie, *La Catalogne du milieu*.

⁴ Toubert, *Les structures du Latium médiéval*.

⁵ Fossier, *Enfance de l'Europe*.

⁶ Duby, *L'économie rurale et la vie des campagnes*; *L'an Mil*; Fossier, *Enfance de l'Europe*.

⁷ 'Ralph Glaber: On the First Millenium'; emphasis mine.

⁸ Lauwers, *Naissance du cimetière*.

mento is considered to have been a long-lasting process spanning from the mid-seventh to the late twelfth century, by which time the parochial framework was fully developed. Nevertheless, after the publication of the thesis of Pierre Toubert, more excavations on Italian hilltop sites — for example, Montarrenti — have revealed occupation layers of the seventh or eighth centuries, prefiguring the height of the *incastellamento* at the end of the first millennium. The new archaeological evidence provoked vivid debates on the dating of the *incastellamento*, particularly amongst British and French scholars who tended to favour the paradigm of *la Mutation de l'an Mil*.⁹

Outside the post-Roman world, in the lately converted northern Europe, notably in Scandinavia, rural churches and the period from the tenth to the early thirteenth centuries also appear to have been decisive elements in the making of the medieval rural landscape. Although this evolution is somewhat later, discussions of the nature and role of rural churches recall many aspects of the leading theories in the old Christian and post-Roman world. The novelty of the religious context in Scandinavia is obvious and should naturally be taken into account in the study of the social and ideological framework of church building. In the 1980s, most Scandinavian research attributed the shaping of the parochial networks to royal and ecclesiastical authorities, whereas little attention was paid to local lords. Nevertheless, many central places and high-status sites from the first millennium have been detected in the vicinity of outstanding Romanesque rural churches, indicating that not only kings but also local and regional elites played a prominent role in the process. The new understanding of the religious landscapes anyhow tends to reflect a rather static and monolithic view on (centralized) Christianity facing a more (decentralized) paganism that naturally influences the theories of social power and religion.¹⁰ The Roman Catholic Church was clearly more centralized than pagan cult places, but it represents an immense variety of Christian religious practices, which thoroughgoing changes during the early Middle Ages continued to affect. Furthermore, the dominating Scandinavian elites knew and adapted symbols of power from Roman and Christian models.

The narrow relationship between power and religion, in both Christian and pagan contexts, makes it interesting to compare the material evidence of religious expressions of power which preceded or favoured the intensive building of

⁹ Citter, *Dieci anni di ricerche a Castel di Pietra*; Francovich and Hodges, *Villa to Village*; Wickham, 'Documenti scritti e archeologia'.

¹⁰ Fabeck, 'Centrality in Sites and Landscapes'.



Map 10.1.
Location map of
northern France
and southern Scan-
dinavia. Map by José
Carlos Sánchez-
Pardo using Demis
WMS World Map.

local churches during the ninth to twelfth centuries. North-west Europe offers a fascinating case study in this respect, since it has both former Roman areas, Christianized since late antiquity, and non-Roman areas such as Scandinavia which maintained old beliefs to the end of the first millennium AD. Religious practices and the articulation of religion with secular power continued to evolve in these places throughout this period. This can also be observed in material culture: sanctuaries, cult centres, burials, for example, show significant evolutions of the material expressions of beliefs following the social levels of the elites. The aim here is not to synthesize this topic, since the variety of pagan and Christian belief in the first millennium is far too complex. The intention is more simply to compare evidence for power and religious practice in Christian and pagan contexts in order to elucidate the social and ideological background of local church building. This will be done through two case studies: northern France and southern Scandinavia (Map 10.1).

In northern France, hundreds, even thousands, of early medieval settlements have been discovered and studied through preventive archaeology since the late 1980s. Most of them date from the mid-seventh century onwards, and improved ceramic sequences have shown that their occupation often contin-

ued during the eleventh or twelfth centuries. Moreover, numerous large-scale excavations have revealed that the layout of the settlements was quite rigorous and that the occupation from the eleventh and twelfth centuries hardly differs from the earlier period. Many settlements lasted for centuries, and several encompass a high-status farmstead or manor site, reflecting important changes within the rural elites. The archaeological evidence thus seriously questioned the paradigm of *la Mutation de l'an Mil* and transformed our understanding of the emergence of the medieval village.¹¹

Nevertheless, among numerous rural excavations, hardly a dozen have uncovered the convincing remains of a church, and none of them can be dated to before the late seventh or eighth centuries.¹² These small rural sanctuaries are thus much later than the Christianization of Gaul in the Roman period, but they were built in a period with underlying changes in settlement systems and burial practices. Several recent excavations in the core of existing villages, notably next to churches, have revealed occupation sequences dating to the late seventh and early eighth centuries.¹³ The new archaeological evidence recalls the quite numerous discoveries of early medieval sarcophagi in village churches and parochial cemeteries. The building of local churches therefore seems to develop in a period where high-status farms became more numerous and when the rural settlements became more stable, especially when they have a church.

Whilst nucleated villages have been a central topic in most European research, Scandinavian and northern European archaeologists have emphasized the transition from moving to stable settlements.¹⁴ The research on the villages of Funen in the late 1970s has been decisive: numerous trial ditches dated the earliest phases of the existing villages to the ninth or, more often, the eleventh or twelfth centuries, whilst earlier settlements were located in the surrounding fields.¹⁵ The topographical anchorage of the villages thus roughly coincides with the period of Christianization. In Denmark too, churches and (especially) cemeteries obviously had a decisive impact on the development

¹¹ Catteddu and Nissen Jaubert, 'Archaeology of the Rural Space'.

¹² Bonnet, 'Les églises en bois'; Catteddu and others, 'Fouilles d'églises rurales du haut Moyen Âge dans le Nord'.

¹³ Gentili, 'Une archéologie du village', pp. 32–37; Raynaud, *Lunel-Viel (Hérault) du I^{er} au XVIII^e siècle*.

¹⁴ Nissen Jaubert, 'Ruptures et continuités de l'habitat rural'.

¹⁵ Grøngaard Jeppesen, *Middelalderlandsbyens opståen*.

and stabilization of the villages.¹⁶ Besides, intensive research since the 1980s on 'productive sites'¹⁷ from the first millennium has thrown new light on the *longue durée* of central places and landscapes of power. It is thus significant that many of the oldest or most impressive parish churches are located near central places from the first millennium. Among these, the renowned places of Gudme, Uppåkra, and Uppsala clearly show the close relationship between power and religion over the centuries.¹⁸ They are not isolated examples; in several cases, significant concentrations in defined areas of high-status evidence, such as artefacts, graves, and monumental churches, from the third to the thirteenth centuries indicate an enduring continuity of places of power, even when beliefs changed.

The cosmological, ideological, and social frameworks in pagan Scandinavia differed fundamentally from the Roman and Christian worlds. Nevertheless, the lavish material culture of pagan Scandinavian elites is testament to their wide-ranging connections across Europe and to cultural interactions. Religion underpinned the authority of both pagan and Christian kings and chieftains: Christian leaders ascribed their sovereignty to *Dei Gratia*, and non-Christian leaders claimed a divine ancestry, for example to *Freyr* or *Wotan*.¹⁹ In both cases, the exercise of power was based on religion, and religion was integral to the negotiation of social relations. The highest pagan Scandinavian elites were clearly influenced by Roman symbols of power, which were translated into appropriate forms through the animal styles and golden bracteates which would later diffuse from Scandinavia to Europe.²⁰ It has even been suggested that Germanic 'sacral kingship' derived from Christian models.²¹ Ultimately,

¹⁶ Porsmose, *De fynske landsbyers historie*, pp. 50–61.

¹⁷ Places characterized by numerous artefacts and evidence for craft activity.

¹⁸ Frölund, Götheburg, and Ljungkvist, *Kungsgården: Ett terrasshus från folkvandringstid*; Gräslund, 'New Perspectives on an Old Problem'; Hårdh, 'Uppåkra — a Centre in South Sweden'; Larsson, 'Ritual Building and Ritual Space'; Larsson, 'The Iron Age Ritual Building'.

¹⁹ Steinsland, 'Rulers as Offspring'.

²⁰ Hedeager, 'Migration Period Europe'; Hedeager, *Iron Age Myth and Materiality*, pp. 50–58; Høilund Nielsen, 'Animal Style — a Symbol of Might'.

²¹ Erkens, 'Reflexionen über das sakrale'; Steinsland, *Den hellige kongen*. Audacious comparison has been made between the layout of the Danish high-status settlement at Tissø and the palace of Charlemagne at Aachen: religious buildings and a monumental hall are central to both. See Jørgensen, 'Manor and Market at Lake Tissø'. On the case of Aachen, see Andreas Schaub and Tanja Kohlberger-Schaub's essay in this volume; on the influences of Aachen on other early medieval ecclesiastical places of power, see Michael Shapland's essay.

the divine Roman emperor probably was a fascinating model to the leading chiefs of the emerging warrior aristocracy in the late second and third centuries.

Religion and Social Power in the Post-Roman and Frankish Worlds

Religion and Political Power

When Constantine embraced the Christian faith, he had to renounce the divine nature of his office. Imperial ceremonials were maintained, but their symbolic language was adapted to the new religion. The emperor was no longer divine, but he represented divine authority on earth: Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea (d. 339) mirrored the celestial with the imperial courts,²² and Constantine introduced the throne (*cathedra*) as the ultimate sign of both secular and religious authority. Christianity thus fused secular and religious power at its highest level.

Although the Merovingian kings could not claim such a degree of sacrality, they strongly invested in Christianity. The leading Frankish aristocracy founded numerous monasteries headed by family members, and several of their number became sanctified, such as queens Radegonde (d. 587) and Bathilde (d. 680). On the other hand, Gregory of Tours (d. 594) related the extravagant luxury and savagery of Merovingian kings, which may look back to pagan royal qualities based on fertility and magic.²³

Aspects of the governance and expression of royal power changed profoundly during the Carolingian period. Institutional ties between the king, the Church, and the episcopacy were reinforced, and royal power assumed a sacral dimension;²⁴ the royal palace was even qualified the *sacrum palatium*.²⁵ Although a gulf separates minor rural elites from the highest Carolingian aristocracy, their position and identity relied on comparable values, encompassing war, display, and piety. In Merovingian times, only the mightiest Frankish families were involved in building of churches and monasteries. The religious display of the other elites is mainly represented by burials and funerary monuments or epitaphs. From Carolingian times, there is good documentary evidence for local landowners building churches on their estates to improve pas-

²² Kolb, 'Das kaiserliche Zeremoniell'.

²³ Le Jan, 'La sacralité de la royauté'.

²⁴ Nelson, 'The Lord's Anointed and the People's Choice'.

²⁵ De Jong, 'Sacrum palatium et ecclesia'.

toral care, but also to ensure spiritual control of the rural populations. Many churches were proprietary, and their income was controlled by the landlords; these *Eigenkirchen* endured despite the Carolingian reforms.²⁶ The churches gradually became the principal theatre of seigniorial conspicuous piety.²⁷

The Changing Functions of Rural Religious Buildings

To understand the background of the local churches, it must be noted that changing mentalities and theological considerations (cf. below) involved that the function of many religious buildings was altered during the early Middle Ages. In late antiquity, the *ecclesia* was primarily a place of Christian assembly; the nature of the building was of lesser importance.²⁸ When the church became a specific building, it was a sacred place and should stay pure. Antique and late antique ecclesiastical authors distinguished 'sacred' from 'holy' and 'religious'. 'Sacrality' implies consecration whereas 'holiness' refers to the intrinsic nature of a place or a relic; 'religious' has a much wider sense concerning practices, structures, and things related to belief.²⁹ Mausolea and *memoria* are thus religious buildings, but they are seldom sacred or holy. The study of the religious buildings should bear these distinctions in mind, as they may imply functional changes over time. Was a rural religious building originally constructed and consecrated as a church with the intention of hosting the Christian community? Or was it a funerary building constructed to commemorate the ancestors of a leading or aristocratic family? The church is (con)sacred, the martyr's tomb is holy but without consecration, and the aristocratic *memoria* is a social expression with the trappings of religion. It is important to bear these distinctions in mind when turning to the changing relationships between churches and burials in the early medieval period. The final interpretation relies more on the context of these religious buildings than their architecture.

The early medieval ecclesiastical terminology is fluid, notably when concerning *ecclesia* and *parochia*: even in the late ninth century Bishop Hincmar of Reims (d. 882) termed both the local parish and the wider bishopric *parochia*.³⁰ On the other hand, late antique and early medieval written sources show

²⁶ Iogna-Prat, *La Maison Dieu*, p. 245; Lauwers, 'Paroisse, paroissiens et territoire'.

²⁷ Feller, *Église et société en Occident*, pp. 178–84.

²⁸ Iogna-Prat, *La Maison Dieu*, pp. 83–84.

²⁹ Iogna-Prat, *La Maison Dieu*, pp. 48–62.

³⁰ Iogna-Prat, *La Maison Dieu*.



Map 10.2.
Map of France
showing the sites
mentioned in the
text. Map by José
Carlos Sánchez-
Pardo using Demis
WMS World Map.

some hierarchical distinction amongst contemporary religious sanctuaries. Cathedrals, baptisteries, and major churches were originally concentrated in the cities. Merovingian councils make a clear hierarchical distinction between baptismal churches and other sanctuaries, just as they distinguish between churches in the *vici* and the *villae*.³¹ A few rural baptisteries, mainly in southern France, are related to large villas, at Portbail in Normandy and Montréal, Séviac in Aquitania (Map 10.2). At this place, a stone church was built in the late seventh century near the old baptistery.³² Recent excavation of a large early Roman villa at Vernay (Isère) has revealed impressive continuity spanning from the late Iron Age to the last centuries of the first millennium.³³ The early medieval occupation is represented by a large dwelling whose architecture still follows Roman antique traditions, and a church — still extant — was built on the old

³¹ Zadora-Rio, 'L'historiographie des paroisses rurales', pp. 20–21; Zadora-Rio, *Des paroisses de Touraine*, pp. 77–80.

³² Lapart and Paillet, 'Montréal-du-Gers'.

³³ See Christine Delaplace's paper in this volume for an overview of the research on early churches in south-east France.

villa baths.³⁴ However, most of the earliest rural churches are located in antique *vici*, for example in the *Region Centre*, at Tavers, Vienne-en-Val, and Paulnay (Map 10.2). It is significant that Gregory of Tours used the word *vicus* for settlements with churches.³⁵

Ecclesiastical organization became progressively more rigorous and hierarchical from the eighth century onwards, particularly during the early Carolingian period. The network of rural churches was increasingly structured, and Charlemagne, followed by Louis the Pious, established the tithe for the economic support of churches.³⁶ The tithe weighed heavily on the development of the parochial network and the churchyard, and linked the parishioners to their church. The priest theoretically gained the authority to decide the place of interment; the rural churchyard became a material expression of community identity, where the dead channelled the economic obligations of the living. Nevertheless, many parochial cemeteries have burials dating to the late sixth century, long before the Carolingian reforms. On the other hand, the numerous ninth- to twelfth-century burials found outside churchyards show that it took centuries for the law to become effective. This suggests that the Carolingian reforms were regulating an ongoing process by which rural elites took care of their souls through the building of *memoriae* or churches, which also ensured their last resting place and their commemoration within the community.

The precise identification of these rather modest religious buildings remains problematic. Written sources attest the existence of small wooden churches, and archaeological excavations have observed more examples. Some of them have a chevet (apsidal east end), but most present a simple rectangular plan and their religious nature is primarily attested by the burials associated with them. This criterion cannot be used to identify a church before the ecclesiastical authorities weaken the prohibition on interments *ad sanctos*, and not only when facing the most powerful members of the society. Several church excavations in Normandy — Thaon, Querqueville, Périers-sur-le-Dan, and Notre-Dame de Guibray — have revealed remains of early medieval stone buildings (see Map 10.2). It is noteworthy that at Périers-sur-le-Dan the initial seventh-century occupation was apparently domestic but was replaced by a probable religious building preceding the partially extant structure of eleventh-century date.³⁷

³⁴ Royet and others, 'Les mutations d'un domaine'.

³⁵ Zadora-Rio, 'L'historiographie des paroisses rurales', pp. 20–21.

³⁶ Feller, *Église et société*, pp. 97, 103–07, 124–26; Iogna-Prat, *La Maison Dieu*.

³⁷ Catteddu and others, 'Fouilles d'églises rurales du haut Moyen Âge', pp. 209–12.

The masonry sanctuaries under these Norman churches contrast with the wooden building of rural settlement. Excavation south of the parish church and cemetery at Rigny-Ussé has revealed large, late antique structures and early medieval timber buildings, indicative of the long-standing importance of the site. Later burials have destroyed the occupation layers, meaning their function and relationship with the earliest church on the site are unknown.³⁸

The early medieval occupation layers in the core of existing villages complete the study of the relationship between rural societies and local churches.³⁹ Many churches thus appear to have anchored their settlements, especially from the late seventh century, even if some may have been rooted in an antique settlement. However, this does not mean that nucleated villages were established in antiquity. The most convincing examples owe their long-lasting continuity to an outstanding position of the antique settlement: *vici*, which had more central economic and social functions, for example temples, theatres, and so on. Furthermore, even when the earliest phases of the villages date to the early Middle Ages or before, it is hardly possible to state their size or degree of nucleation. The principal layout of the villages, figuring on cadastral maps, was mainly shaped during the late Middle Ages.⁴⁰

Churches and Burials as Devices for Social Power

Late antique and early medieval ecclesiastics were generally little concerned with funerals, believing them to belong to the private sphere. Nevertheless, they were firmly opposed to interments *ad sanctos* (within churches). As in the Roman period, corpses were considered to be impure and infectious, and burials were separated from the spaces of the living, and especially from Christian sanctuaries. Funerary churches, necropolises, mausolea, and *memoriae* surrounded the cities, and *Reihengräber* ('row grave cemeteries') were located outside rural settlements.

The cult of martyr's graves and relics gradually opened the way to burials of saints *ad sanctos*, although it took centuries for the practice to be generally accepted. Powerful people sought the right for burial *ad sanctos*: around 420–21 Bishop Pauline of Nola was compelled to accept the interment of a noble's son in his basilica. He therefore wrote to St Augustine, who was sym-

³⁸ Zadora-Rio and others, 'La fouille du site de Rigny'.

³⁹ Gentili, 'Une archéologie du village'.

⁴⁰ Nissen Jaubert, 'L'espace rural'.

pathetic, stating that the last resting place in a sanctuary should be deserved through a life of exemplary virtue and piety.⁴¹ At the end of the sixth century, Gregory the Great dissuaded common mortals against being buried *ad sanctos*, warning them of divine sanction, and Gregory of Tours relates how the soil of the church ejected corpses interred there.⁴² Nevertheless, in another context the same author narrates the richly furnished interment of a young aristocratic female in Metz cathedral.⁴³ The examples of Nola, Metz, and the early sixth-century princely graves under Cologne cathedral of a young woman and, especially, a ten-year-old boy (who could hardly have had time to have lived a saintly life) show that leading aristocratic families could negotiate their last resting place *ad sanctos*. Outside such elevated circles, this was hardly possible, and elites used other frameworks to place burials at the centre of conspicuous piety. In many cases, *memoriae* may have contained their graves, but they were not churches. Early foundations or burials beneath Romanesque churches do not prove their antiquity as Christian sanctuaries: they may originate from funerary monuments. The complex history of the parish church and Benedictine priory of St Laurent near Grenoble offers a fine illustration of this process. At this place Roman mausolea, replaced by a probable martyr's mausoleum, started a long sequence of religious buildings on which the early medieval and later Romanesque churches were constructed.⁴⁴

Antique ruins were obvious focal points for funerary activity, and it is significant that later occupation of antique *vici* is mainly characterized by burials. At Mondeville, Delle-St-Martin, an early medieval settlement occupies the site of a probable antique *vicus*; the church dates from the late seventh century and partially reuses antique foundations. From the seventh to the tenth centuries, numerous burials clustered around the church. Although the village has no clear evidence for high-status farmsteads, several sarcophagi are concentrated in the church, and a large building (interpreted as a tithe barn) lay within the churchyard.⁴⁵ Sometimes, cemeteries are related to Roman temples or *fana*, as at St Georges de Boscherville in Normandy or Jau in Gironde.⁴⁶ It is more likely

⁴¹ Rebillard, 'Violation de sépultures', p. 74; Treffort, *L'église carolingienne et la mort*, pp. 25–27.

⁴² Treffort, *L'église carolingienne et la mort*, pp. 28–29.

⁴³ Halsall, 'Female Status and Power', p. 1.

⁴⁴ Colardelle, *La ville et la Mort*.

⁴⁵ Lorren, 'L'église Saint-Martin de Mondeville'; Lorren, 'Le village de Saint-Martin à Mondeville'.

⁴⁶ Cartron and Castex, 'L'occupation d'un ancien îlot'; Le Maho, 'Aux origines du paysage'.

that the reuse of antique ruins for burial was an expression of *Romanitas* rather than evidence for the continuity of cult practice. In more cases, the dead were buried in vernacular buildings, often the baths, as in Boos and Gisay-le-Coudre in Normandy or the aforementioned Vernay. Comparable reuse of ancient monuments has been observed at prehistoric megaliths and tumuli, for example at Tournedos-sur-Seine, the Calotterie, and St-Vit.⁴⁷ It is therefore interesting that several prestigious sixth-century inhumations are found near large villas. Outside France, the well-known aristocratic tomb of Morken, southern Germany, illustrates well successive uses of an ancient monument. The burial chamber, dated c. 600, is located within a local church, dedicated to St Martin, which partly reused the baths of a Roman villa. The extant church, which dates from the tenth and eleventh centuries, probably had a timber predecessor. In this case the relationship between the burial and the church is not straightforward, because both churches are later than the grave. Thus, their construction seems to be primarily related to the earlier place of power and, perhaps, the memory of ancestors, and highlights the importance of considering the location, the dating, and the status of the deceased.

Similar early medieval changes in the function of religious buildings may be noticed a little north of Paris, at the village of Louvres and the nearby castle at Orville. The area is an interesting example of a long-lasting landscape of power stretching about 900 metres along the river Rhine.⁴⁸ Louvres has two churches, with one, Saint-Rieuil, encompassing lavish burials from the early sixth century; one male grave even contained a sword — *spatha* — with a golden grip.⁴⁹ The church probably replaced an earlier funerary building. Trial ditches within the village and an excavation next to the church uncovered parts of a contemporary settlement. Another necropolis, dating to the mid-eighth century and including a sarcophagus and rich graves, has been found halfway between the village and the castle of Orville. At this place, an early medieval settlement with a large double-aisled building from the late tenth or early eleventh centuries was abandoned when the castle was built immediately east of the settlement. All in all, the area of Louvres-Orville represents an impressive archaeological sequence of elite presence throughout the Middle Ages.

⁴⁷ Billard and others, 'L'occupation funéraire des monuments'; Carré and Treffort 'La place des monuments'; Urlacher, Passard-Urlacher, and Gizard, *Saint-Vit, Les Champs Traversains — Doubs*.

⁴⁸ Gentili, 'Une archéologie du village'.

⁴⁹ Huet, 'Annexe: La tombe de chef'.

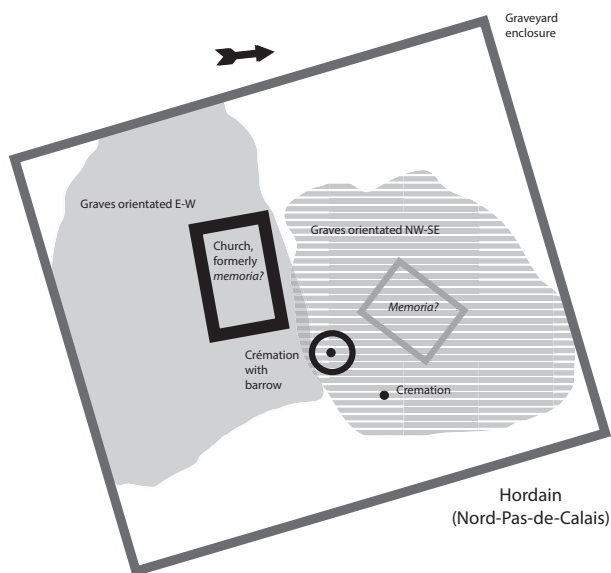


Figure 10.1.
Orientation of graves,
Hordain, Nord Pas-de-Calais.
Schema by the author, after
Demolon, *La nécropole
mérovingienne de Hordain*.

The cemetery of Hordain offers more concrete evidence on possible functional changes of religious buildings (Figure 10.1). The earliest phases, dating to the early sixth century, include horse burials, cremations, and barrows and are likely to represent pagan practice.⁵⁰ Some decades later they were succeeded by graves orientated south-west to north-west. One of them, a substantial grave, is isolated from the surrounding burials, which seem to respect a now-disappeared building measuring around eleven by six metres.⁵¹ In the mid-sixth century, another rectangular stone building was constructed in the southern part of the burial area. The building is presently interpreted as a church, contains remnants of the altar, and is orientated east-west. It accommodates the richest graves of the site, notably a large, richly furnished weapon-burial and the site's only sarcophagus. It is significant that the graves of the southern area follow the orientation of the suggested church, whereas the burials in the northern part of the cemetery are orientated with the large tomb in the probable wooden building.⁵² However, the emplacement of burials *ad sanctos* seems unusually early in this context, and the stratigraphical context does not exclude that the possible altar is a later addition. It is more likely that the building was originally a *memo-*

⁵⁰ Demolon, *La nécropole mérovingienne de Hordain*.

⁵¹ Demolon, *La nécropole mérovingienne de Hordain*, fig. 18, pp. 41–42.

⁵² Demolon, *La nécropole mérovingienne de Hordain*, fig. 19, pp. 42–45, 260, 238.

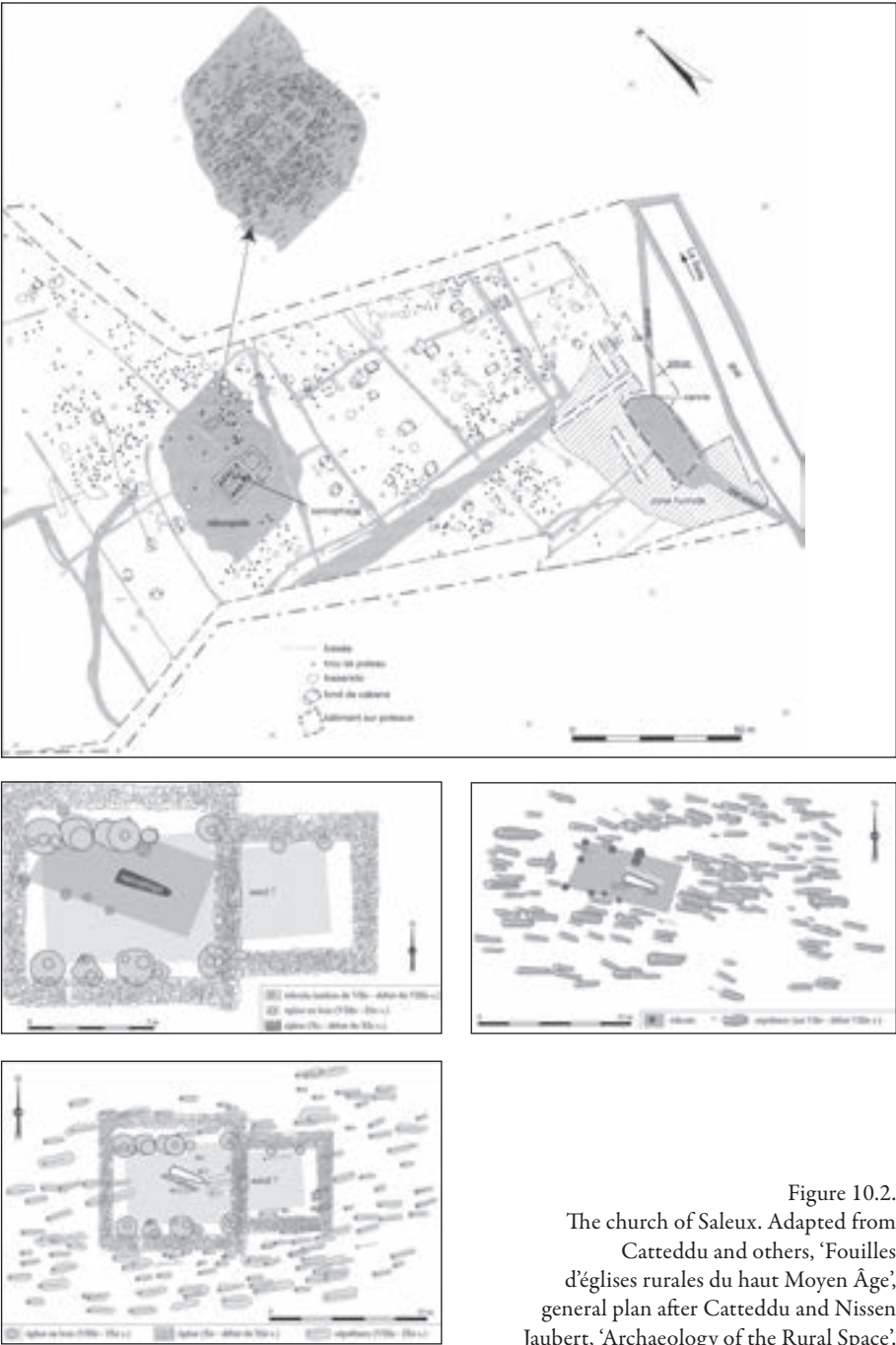


Figure 10.2.
The church of Saleux. Adapted from
Catteddu and others, 'Fouilles
d'églises rurales du haut Moyen Âge',
general plan after Catteddu and Nissen
Jaubert, 'Archaeology of the Rural Space'.

ria subsequently converted into a church. The cemetery was abandoned in the late tenth century, probably when the inhabitants settled around a new church, and the castle, in the nearby village.

In the settlement of Serris 'les Ruelles', north of Paris, an impressive manor site with a probable church and cemetery was established in the late seventh century. The secular and religious foci are located on the edge of the settlement, on both banks of a stream. Whereas the ordinary farmsteads had wooden buildings, those of the manorial hall and the buildings in the cemetery were in stone. Fragments of window glass in the manorial and cemetery areas are further evidence for the exceptional nature of these buildings. In the manor site, ceramics, artefacts, and faunal evidence is indicative of conspicuous consumption. During the eighth–ninth centuries, the settlement layout changed. The manor site was abandoned and a new manorial complex was established next to the church and churchyard. The church and manor site were now brought together in a coherent area in the north-western part of the settlement. The manorial buildings still surpassed the others of the settlement, but they were of wood and the only buildings of stone were concentrated on the churchyard.⁵³

At Saleux (Figure 10.2), the settlement was originally separated from the cemetery which developed around a sepulchre with a sarcophagus in a small wooden building that orientated the earliest inhumations. At some point in the eighth century a wooden church replaced this funerary structure on a new orientation respected by succeeding burials. During the same period, new farmsteads were established near the church and cemetery, which became the focus of the settlement. In the tenth century, the church was enlarged and partially rebuilt in stone.⁵⁴

At Tournedos-sur-Seine, the church was built in an existing cemetery located in the extreme northern part of the settlement. Both originate in the mid-seventh century.⁵⁵ The oldest graves clustered around a Neolithic megalith. A square sunken feature (4.8 × 5 m), a possible mausoleum, in the northern part of the cemetery encompasses a sarcophagus. The surrounding graves appear to respect the orientation of this structure, which stood for at least a century

⁵³ Catteddu and others, 'Fouilles d'églises rurales du haut Moyen Âge', pp. 218–24; Gentili and Valais, 'Composantes aristocratiques'.

⁵⁴ Catteddu, 'Le site médiéval de Saleux'; Catteddu, 'Le site haut médiéval de Saleux'; Catteddu and others, 'Fouilles d'églises rurales du haut Moyen Âge'.

⁵⁵ Carré, 'Le site de Portejoie'; Carré, 'Méthode d'approche de la chronologie'; Catteddu and others, 'Fouilles d'églises rurales du haut Moyen Âge', pp. 212–15.

before it was burnt between the late eighth and the late tenth centuries. The building was therefore standing when a probable timber church measuring 7 by 5.5 metres was erected in the centre of the cemetery between the mid-seventh and mid-ninth centuries. The building gained a stone apse, probably in the tenth century, and can be identified with a church dedicated to St Cecilia mentioned in a ducal donation of 1006. The settlement was abandoned a few decades later.

Among the above-mentioned examples, only Serris has clear evidence for a manorial complex. Nevertheless, there are hints of elite presence at Mondeville and Tournedos. At Tournedos, the faunal evidence from pits associated with the church is indicative of high-status meat consumption.⁵⁶ More consistent evidence for rural elites in these sites can be found among the dead, thanks to sarcophagi clustering within and around the church. The little wooden building preceding the church of Saleux contained the cemetery's only sarcophagus. Attention should be drawn to the funerary buildings prior to the church at both Saleux and Tournedos. At Saleux, the *memoria* was transformed to a church in the eighth century when the settlement gradually encroached upon the cemetery. It is probably also during this period that the church of Tournedos was built between the settlement and the old mausoleum. The two buildings in the cemetery of Serris probably reflect an even more complicated sequence, which exceeds the confines of this paper.

A cemetery and funerary building(s) were a part of the earliest occupation of Saleux, Tournedos, and Serris from the late seventh century. They all date to a period where the burials within the settlements became still more numerous, indicating a growing acceptance of the dead within spaces for the living. These graves are not related to buildings; they are clustered along tracks, across roads, or in other central spaces of the settlements, so as to remain visible in order to recall the memory of the deceased.⁵⁷ The presence of sarcophagi is quite exceptional in ordinary rural settlements and are usually concentrated in sites with churches or antique ruins. The gradual acceptance of burial within settlements, and the weakened opposition to interments *ad sanctos*, profoundly transformed the framework of social and religious expression, offering new possibilities to combine the care of the soul with religious ostentation. In many cases, the oldest phases of rural churches are deduced from high-status graves and sarcophagi. The local elites' last resting place therefore appears as a key factor in the development of rural churches. The revival of the ecclesiastical opposition to

⁵⁶ Carré and others, 'Le site rural de Porte-Joie'.

⁵⁷ Gaultier, 'Les sépultures en contexte'; Pecqueur, 'Des morts chez les vivants'.

burials *ad sanctos* in the ninth century hardly seems to have affected the local churches, whereas it has influenced the major urban sanctuaries and funerary churches.⁵⁸ It cannot be excluded that dating problems hide a chronological gap in the rural context. It seems, however, more likely that the ecclesiastical authorities concentrated their efforts on the major sanctuaries. Many local lords considered the church as their property (see above) and wished to negotiate the right to rest near their ancestors in their sanctuary.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the above-mentioned wooden churches were rebuilt in stone during the ninth and tenth centuries; increasing investment in local church building has also been observed in southern France during the same period.⁵⁹ The archaeological evidence thus throws a new light on the famous sentence of Ralph Glaber and attests the intensive building activity of local lords at the end of the first millennium, which was rooted in the changing function of rural religious buildings from the late seventh century onwards.

Even if the rural churches seem to have anchored most villages since the last centuries of the first millennium, they did not prevent the settlements of Saleux, Mondeville, Serris, and Tournedos from moving between the late tenth and early twelfth centuries. Only the church of Tournedos was kept in use into the early fourteenth century, even though the parish village of Portejoie was roughly only two kilometres away.

Religion and Power in Southern Scandinavia

Religion and Social Power in Southern Scandinavia during the First Millennium AD

When the Scandinavian societies adopted the Christian faith, they faced a rather unified and rigorous ecclesiastical concept of Christianity forged during the Carolingian period. Most of the southern Scandinavian rural churches were built during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, at first by the king and leading aristocratic families, then by regional and local lords.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Sapin, 'Architecture and Funerary Space'.

⁵⁹ Schneider, 'Dossier special: Archéologie des églises'; Zadora-Rio, 'Archéologie des églises et des cimetières'.

⁶⁰ Nyborg, 'Enkeltmænd og fællesskaber'.

In the last pagan times, the chroniclers Thietmar of Merseburg (d. 1034)⁶¹ and Adam of Bremen (d. 1081/85)⁶² record royal residences at Lejre and Uppsala and describe extravagant pagan sacrifices. Adam of Bremen's well-known description of the pagan temple at Uppsala has directed interpretations of the postholes discovered within the church at Uppsala which were currently interpreted as the remnants of the pagan temple or of a former church. In reality these features belonged to a settlement sequence of the Roman Iron Age, long before the heyday of Uppsala.⁶³

As in France, the question of cult continuity has been an important topic in Scandinavian archaeology. Detailed study by Olaf Olsen on the question of cult places in pre-Christian Scandinavia highlighted the unreliable archaeological evidence,⁶⁴ which seriously questioned the supposed topographical continuity between pagan cult places and churches. About twenty-five years later, intensive research on central places from the third to the eleventh centuries AD has improved our understanding of pagan practice, revealing the outstanding places of power to have been cult centres. Numerous studies have also shown that many pre-Christian high-status settlements are located near extant Romanesque churches. The focus changed from a continuity of cult centres to a continuity of power, where the church offered new frameworks for religious ostentation.⁶⁵

Although late Iron Age power centres generally lasted for centuries, neither Scandinavian society nor pagan religious practice were static. By the late second century AD warrior elites had come to hold a central position in society, and religious practices changed, notably with the appearance of the great weapon sacrifices where the equipment of hundreds of warriors was deposited in holy lakes. These offerings were surely public religious ceremonies, and contrast with the evidence from the earlier period. In the middle of the fifth century, the large weapon offerings disappear. People continued to sacrifice weapons, but in small quantities, and they selected prestigious weapons such as swords and spears.⁶⁶ Furthermore, many offerings of golden objects, especially symbols of power,

⁶¹ Thietmar of Merseburg, *Die Chronik*, Liber I, p. 17.

⁶² Adam of Bremen, *History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen*, Liber IV, pp. 26–29.

⁶³ Gräslund, 'New Perspectives on an Old Problem'; Ljungkvist, 'Den förhistoriska bebyggelsen'.

⁶⁴ Olsen, *Hørg, hov og kirke*.

⁶⁵ Nissen Jaubert, 'Lieux de pouvoir et voies'; Nissen Jaubert, 'Un ou plusieurs royaume'.

⁶⁶ Fabech, 'Samfundsorganisation, religiøse ceremonier'.

date from this period: arm- and neck-rings, fibulas, significant numbers of bracteate hoards, and later gold-foil figures.⁶⁷

The egregious, conspicuous waste of military equipment indicates that leading chieftains were involved in the cult, although it is unknown whether they conducted the rituals or if a priestly class existed.⁶⁸ It is worth noting that Tacitus evoked the divine ancestry of the *Ingaevones* tribe. In the late fifth century, the first bracteates were produced at Gudme, imitating the Roman imperial imagery on the solidi. Later bracteates depicted Odin, the god of the warrior elites, and other Nordic divinities.⁶⁹ The gold-foil figures which appear in the sixth century often depict an embracing couple, which may refer to the divine ancestry of chieftains (cf. above). Symbols of power and religion were in this way fused. The key position of kings and chieftains in religious practice is also suggested from changes in the location of offering places, as lakes and rivers declined and the majority of hoards came to be deposited on dry land associated with high-status settlements. The illustrious central place at Gudme is the earliest and most outstanding example, but the phenomenon is also noticed at the centres Sorte Muld, Uppåkra, and Tissø, to name a few.⁷⁰

Southern Scandinavian Cult Places before and after the Conversion: The Debate over Continuity

Changes in religious practice also coincided with the emergence of monumental halls.⁷¹ The earliest known examples come from Gudme, where two huge halls were erected in the mid-third century AD. The larger was forty-seven metres long and is interpreted as a royal residence; the smaller twenty-five metres long, a putative temple. Both were rebuilt on the same spot over the succeeding three centuries. An extraordinary gilt silver imitation of a Roman imperial diadem from the third century was discovered in the larger hall;⁷² both hall and diadem evoke Roman imperial symbols of power. In recent decades monumental halls have been uncovered at several high-status settlements from the late

⁶⁷ Axboe, *Brakteatstudier*; Watt, 'The Gold-Figure Foils'.

⁶⁸ Tacitus, *Germania*, L 2 § 3–4; cf. Hedeager, *Iron Age Myth and Materiality*, p. 215.

⁶⁹ Axboe, 'Gudme and the Gold Bracteates'.

⁷⁰ Jørgensen, 'Pre-Christian Cult at Aristocratic Residences'.

⁷¹ Jørgensen, 'Pre-Christian Cult at Aristocratic Residences'; Larsson and Lenntorp, 'The Enigmatic House'.

⁷² Sørensen, 'The Political and Religious Centre at Gudme'.

Map 10.3.
Map of southern
Scandinavia showing
the sites mentioned
in the text. Map by
José Carlos Sánchez-
Pardo using Demis
WMS World Map.



Iron Age and Viking periods in Scandinavia, notably Lejre, Tisø, Uppsala, and Uppåkra. The latter is smaller than the others, but it was constructed from timbers of impressive dimensions and would be rebuilt on the same site from the early fifth to the ninth centuries. All these places were almost certainly royal residences: Lejre and Uppsala are the legendary cradles of the dynasties of the *Scyldings* and the *Ynglinga*, and Uppåkra was a royal possession in the early eleventh century. Only Tisø is an anonymous place, but in the Middle Ages, the area belonged to the mighty Hvide family. A further high-status site has been excavated at Järrestad in Scania, dating from the seventh to the eleventh centuries. The place name probably derives from *Jarl* — ‘earl’.⁷³ It is significant that known monumental halls are related to places with evidence of pagan cult, such as offerings associated with the buildings, cult structures relating to ritual banquets, and possible temples such as Gudme and Tisø.⁷⁴

⁷³ Söderberg, ‘Integrating Power: Some Aspects of a Magnate’s Farm’.

⁷⁴ Jørgensen, ‘Manor and Market at Lake Tisø’; Jørgensen, ‘Pre-Christian Cult at Aristocratic Residences’.

The principal sites of religious character in Scandinavia were clearly associated with the dominating elites (Map 10.3). The existence of a specialized priesthood is uncertain: runic inscriptions mention *Gode* and *Thul* in reference to a religious function, but their purpose was to commemorate secular elites.⁷⁵ The inscription at Glavendrup, which commemorates a *Gode*, was erected in the prow of a large stone ship setting, and the deceased appears to have been a mighty landowner and warrior. The archaeological evidence therefore points to a clear association between religious centres and the foremost places of power during the late Iron Age. The religious dimension of power seems limited to the highest levels of society, analogous to early medieval sacral kingship and even the divine nature of the pre-Christian Roman emperors.

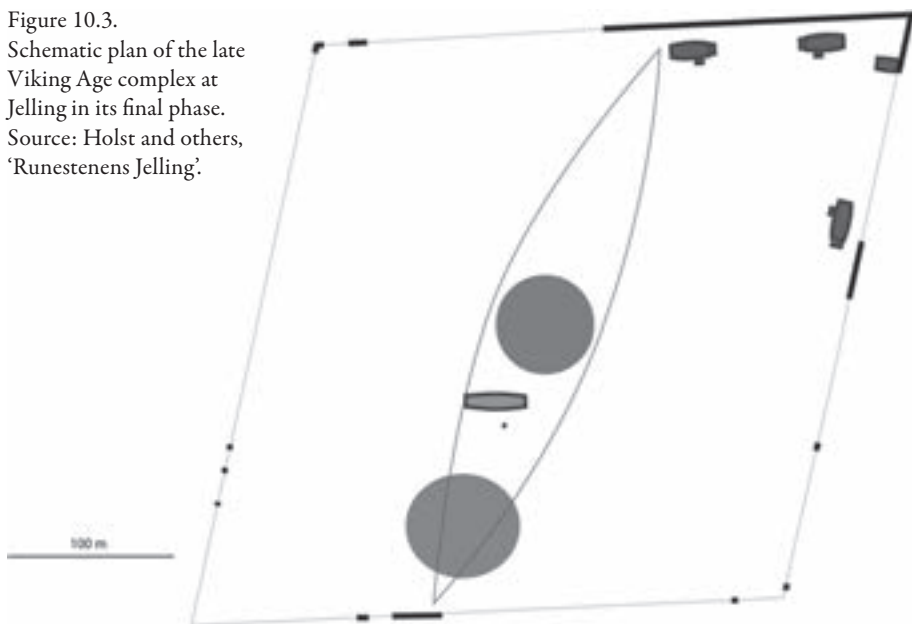
The outstanding position of the mightiest Scandinavian chieftains and kings in pagan religion naturally made them leading figures in the conversion to Christianity. These suggested former pagan cult-leaders now displayed their Christian faith and invested heavily in church building. It is noteworthy that the monumental halls were closely related to pagan contexts, and the latest ones dating to the eleventh century were built on ancient places of cult and power, for example at Lejre and Tissø. As had happened some centuries previously in the Christian West, where stone churches replaced those of timber whilst rural lordly residences continued to be made from wood (cf. above), Scandinavian elites concentrated their efforts on church construction at the expense of their halls. At the royal place at Gamla Uppsala, the Swedish king built a church, which even had cathedral status until the late thirteenth century. It lay adjacent to the huge sixth- to seventh-century barrows and near the old monumental hall of eighth- to tenth-century date.⁷⁶ Many high-status settlements lay in the vicinity of a village at the head of a hundred (*herred*), an administrative structure grouping more parishes. The obvious influence of these Iron Age centres on the medieval territorial organization indicates continuity of power either side of the conversion. Lejre and Tissø are troubling exceptions which dramatically dwindled in importance at the beginning of the Christian period: Lejre is now barely a hamlet, and Tissø a field. Specific political circumstances and conflict among the leading Danish dynasties may explain why they lost all importance in the new Christian kingdom.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Christensen, *Vikingetidens Danmark*, pp. 93–96.

⁷⁶ Ljungkvist, 'Den förhistoriska bebyggelsen'; Ljungkvist, 'Uppsala högars datering'.

⁷⁷ Nissen Jaubert, 'Un ou plusieurs royaumes danois?.'

Figure 10.3.
Schematic plan of the late
Viking Age complex at
Jelling in its final phase.
Source: Holst and others,
'Runestenens Jelling'.



Jelling (Figure 10.3) is the most impressive place of conversion in southern Scandinavia and the largest Nordic pagan funerary monument. Two rune stones record the presence of the royal dynasty at the site: the larger was erected by Harald Bluetooth (d. c. 985), *Kuml*,⁷⁸ to commemorate Gorm his father and Thyre his mother, and the smaller by Gorm in memory of Thyre. The two rune stones and the large Romanesque church lie between two monumental barrows in the southern part of a huge c. 358 metre long stone ship setting. Recent excavations have revealed a large enclosure surrounding the royal funerary monument, and more buildings from the late tenth century.⁷⁹ The northern barrow had an emptied funerary chamber, whereas a large tenth-century grave in the church contained the reburied remains of two males; the newly converted Harald probably transferred his father's corpse to a sepulchre *ad sanctos*,⁸⁰ which is rare in early Christian Scandinavia.⁸¹

⁷⁸ A term probably referring to the graves, the runic stones, and perhaps also a church.

⁷⁹ Holst, Jessen, and Pedersen, 'Runestenens Jelling'; Jessen and others, 'Kongensgård i Jelling?'.

⁸⁰ Krogh, *Vikingekongernes Monumenter*.

⁸¹ Andrén, 'Ad sanctos — de dödas plats'.

The discovery of the royal manor site at Jelling raised the possibility that the postholes in the church belonged to a monumental hall. This interpretation changes earlier theories, whereby the postholes were attributed to a church built by Harald Bluetooth or his son Sven Forkbeard around the late tenth century.⁸² To corroborate this hypothesis, Jelling has been compared with the large tenth-century enclosed church and farmstead at Lisbjerg. Here, the Romanesque church replaced a wooden church of eleventh-century date, built on the site of a wooden building interpreted as the hall of the Viking manorial residence.⁸³ However, the building at Lisbjerg is later in date than the wooden structure at Jelling. Moreover, the comparison takes no account of the most unusual emplacement of the central building in Jelling, which is located inside a funerary stone ship, between two barrows. This location is far more compatible with a habitation for the dead than the living or with a religious building. The limited number of artefacts from Jelling can be compared to other contemporary probable royal residences at Tissø, Lejre, Uppåkra, and Füsing (near Slesvig).⁸⁴ Furthermore, the mainly late tenth-century occupation of the royal manor is amazingly short compared to the other known high-status settlements. It seems more likely that the newly converted Harald Bluetooth wanted to Christianize a highly symbolic place, building a church and erecting a richly ornamented rune stone which also depicts Christ on the cross. The stone's long inscription not only commemorates Harald's pagan parents, it also records that Harald ordered the making of the monument(s) *kuml* and emphasizes his role as the king who Christianized the Danes. The wooden building within the stone ship setting recalls known conversions of funerary monuments and *memoria* into churches in the old Christian world (cf. above). A similar Danish case may have existed at Hørning, albeit on a more modest scale and in a later context, where a later eleventh-century church was built on the rich late tenth-century barrow of a female.⁸⁵ Although the chronological sequence is more rapid at Jelling, the underlying principles appear similar: the construction of a church on an ancestor's grave both expressed piety and made a link with the past.

⁸² Krogh, *Vikingekongernes Monumenter*; Randsborg, 'Kings' Jelling: Gorm & Thyra's Palace'.

⁸³ Jeppesen, 'Magnate Farms and Lordship'.

⁸⁴ Dobat, 'Ein frühmittelalterliche Zentralplatz'.

⁸⁵ Krogh and Voss, 'Fra hedenskab til kristendom'; Roesdahl, 'Aristocratic Burial in Late Viking Age Denmark'.

The Building of Rural Churches in Southern Scandinavian

Written evidence for development and social background of rural churches in Scandinavia is scarce. In the late eleventh century Adam of Bremen laments that the Church had to pay each religious office because the tithe was not instituted,⁸⁶ indicating that the earliest churches were private. It is difficult to catch a glimpse of local elites investing in church construction, which was mainly undertaken through oral agreements. As late as in 1191, Bishop Absalon explains in a letter to the Pope that the Danish lords do not issue charters when granting land to the Church, but place a clod of earth on the altar before witnesses.⁸⁷ The study of the local church thus rests on archaeological analysis of the standing buildings and their surroundings: their dating, architecture, and layout offer precious insights into their social and economic contexts.⁸⁸ This approach differs from that in France, where archaeological research has concentrated on the churchyards and spatial analysis to explore how church influenced settlement layout,⁸⁹ whereas the study of church buildings mainly is limited to art-historical approaches.

The historian Aksel E. Christensen has gone so far as to combine the number of parish churches (*c.* 2000) and the 7916 *rustici* in the Halland list of the Danish *Census Book* of 1231 to calculate that the Danish population was more than one million inhabitants at that time.⁹⁰ Although he later refuted the results himself,⁹¹ this estimate continues to influence archaeological and historical analysis. Axel Bolvig referred to these demographic estimations to conclude that the Romanesque churches of Zealand were too small to have had a pastoral role as parochial centres, and thus interpreted them as exclusive aristocratic churches.⁹² However, this theory relies on a circular argument, and it does not consider the chronological gap between the construction of the churches and the *Census Book*. Moreover, the idea of the exclusive aristo-

⁸⁶ Adam of Bremen, *History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen*, Liber IV, § 31.

⁸⁷ Christensen, Nielsen, and Weibull, *Diplomatarium Danicum*, III, no. 238.

⁸⁸ For example, Anglert, 'Den kyrkliga orgnaisation'; Nyborg, 'Kirke — sognedannelse — bebyggelse'; Skre, *Gård og kirke*.

⁸⁹ Alduc-Le Bagousse, *Inhumations et édifices*; Galinié and Zadora-Rio, *Archéologie du cimetière chrétien*; Schneider, 'Dossier special: Archéologie des églises'; Zadora-Rio, 'The Making of Churchyards and Parish Territories'.

⁹⁰ Nielsen, *Liber Census Daniae*; Christensen, *Danmarks befolkning og bebyggelse*.

⁹¹ Christensen, 'Tiden 1042–1241'.

⁹² Bolvig, *Kirkekunstens storhedstid*.

cratic church is in contradiction to the development of rural parochial centres elsewhere in Europe. Private seigniorial chapels existed, but local churches were key features in the villages, which even sustained the seigniorial control on the peasant populations, as pointed out in many regional studies, notably those of Robert Fossier and Pierre Toubert (cf. above). Besides, the churches of Zealand are generally older than those in western Denmark. In many areas, the oldest churches are the smallest, such as when comparing local churches in France of the eleventh century with those from the twelfth. The small size of the Zealandic churches of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries cannot therefore be used to conclude that they were too small to contain the (falsely) estimated population of *c.* 1250. Additionally, the Zealand churches have often been enlarged later on. The situation is different in Jutland, where churches are generally some decades younger, and there is a good correlation between the size of the nave and the first detailed population census of *c.* 1800.⁹³ The differences observed between Jutland and Zealand are probably the result of the agricultural and demographic changes during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries on one hand, and changes in building practices on the other. The differences tell quite a lot about the local lords' capacity to invest and organize stone building at a particular moment in time, but little about the private worship of elites.

Conclusions

This overview of two different areas of Christian and pagan Europe makes it possible to draw some conclusions as to the relationship between religion and social power over time. In the beginning of the studied period, public religious activity was closely associated with the highest elites in both Christian northern Gaul and pagan southern Scandinavia. The extravagant Scandinavian weapon sacrifices appear in the late second century when the Nordic societies were undergoing profound social transformations and as new warrior elites emerged. Although it is likely that the leading elites participated in this cult activity, it is uncertain whether they personally embodied sacral leadership. The practices of cult changed. The public religious display of power seems limited to the leading members of the society. The nature of bracteates and the earliest monumental halls, notably at Gudme *c.* 250, in southern Scandinavia may even indicate that the Scandinavian chieftains or kings adopted imperial modes of ideological power and legitimacy.

⁹³ Nissen Jaubert, *Peuplement et structures d'habitat*; Nyborg, 'Kirke — sognedannelse — bebyggelse'.

Turning to northern France, the conspicuous piety of the Christian Merovingian royal dynasties focused on monastic foundation. Queens and princesses became abbesses, and some were even canonized after their deaths. The earliest rural churches from late antiquity were mainly concentrated in the *vici*. However, the large majority of local churches were later; in most cases their oldest religious features are interments. Sometimes, they are associated with remnants of earlier structures, but it is often impossible to state if they belonged to funerary monuments or even secular buildings. The construction of fully fledged churches was mainly the matter of the leading elites. When Charlemagne forged his imperial ambitions in the late eighth century, he drew heavily upon royal sacrality, where even his palace was qualified as being sacred. From the late seventh century, a weakened opposition to inhumations *ad sanctos* gradually changed the frames of religious display, allowing local and regional elites to articulate a new conspicuous piety that combined burial and church building, ensuring a new focus of rural settlement and communities.⁹⁴ The Carolingian ecclesiastical reforms and the introduction of the tithe accompanied the local lords' investment in church building, favouring a widespread covering of rural parochial centres.

Compared to the old Christian world, Scandinavia maintained a traditional scheme whereby the public practice of cult was confined to the mightiest kings and chieftains. The introduction of Christianity marked a decisive turn in elite practice lower down the social scale, as several large farmsteads and even lesser manorial sites from the late Viking Age and the early Middle Ages were associated with the parish church, which they are likely to have originally founded.⁹⁵

In both northern France and southern Scandinavia, the construction of churches had a decisive impact on the framing of rural territories and the making of medieval villages. The central concepts of *incastellamento* and *inecclesiamiento* mentioned at the beginning of this chapter focus on, respectively, the role of the lay military aristocracy and of the Church in anchoring the settlements and shaping medieval nucleated settlements. The ideological and religious dimensions of the domination of rural elites make these two processes look much the same where power and religion were highly correlated.

⁹⁴ Although for a different and later context, some interesting parallels on the combined use of funerary monuments and churches as strategies of social power can be observed in Aleksandra McClain's essay in this volume.

⁹⁵ Nissen Jaubert, *Peuplement et structures d'habitat*.

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THE CHURCH AND THE LAND: SETTLEMENT, ECONOMY, AND POWER IN EARLY MEDIEVAL ENGLAND

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Introduction

This chapter explores the changing character of social authority in early medieval England and the way in which the Church was used to materialize and consolidate power relations. It shows that elite power shifted from a tribute-orientated regime to one which was rooted in agricultural exploitation: a system which eventually developed into the manorial system recognizable by the time of the late eleventh-century *Domesday Survey*. A crucial element of this process was the development of dependent settlements on early medieval monastic estates. Church communities were characterized by a more permanent lifestyle than their secular counterparts which placed unique pressures on their servile peasants. In order to sustain their stable and non-producing populations, monastic groups were responsible for establishing permanent and highly organized demesne farms which enabled leading authorities to shape and consolidate perceptions of social order. The internal structuring of such settlements enabled the status of entire communities to be clearly manifest in the Anglo-Saxon landscape for the first time, as the definition of an individual's space began to mirror that of their position in society.

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Changing Social Display in Early Medieval England

Background: Britain after Rome

According to the present state of our knowledge, even before the breakdown of Roman administration, political authority in fourth-century Britain was beginning to shift from the *civitates* to a more dispersed power base in the countryside. Whilst archaeological material demonstrates the continued presence and vitality of most urban centres until at least the seventh century, it similarly indicates that the former economic role of towns was largely lost during the fifth and sixth centuries.¹ Archaeologists have struggled to discern the way in which the developing forms of post-Roman authority were articulated, however, as for the most part the small farming communities of the immediate post-Roman period present little in the way of social differentiation, and the richer material culture invested in the contemporary burial tableau similarly lacks significant extremes of rank. It is only during the late sixth and seventh centuries that the stratification of society can be seen more clearly in the archaeological evidence, with the wealth invested into princely graves appearing all the more remarkable when the widespread standardization of most burial rites of the period is considered.²

These marked disparities detectable in the funerary record from the early seventh century have received significant interest from scholars attempting to trace the development of early medieval power relations.³ Indeed, it is unlikely to be a coincidence that Anglo-Saxon kingdoms appear in the historical record at around the same time as princely burials were first utilized,⁴ and it seems appropriate that the immensely rich graves, found at sites such as Sutton Hoo in Suffolk and Taplow in Buckinghamshire, are associated with a powerful ruling elite. The evidence from rural settlements dated to the fifth and sixth centuries does not suggest, however, that the growing authority of individuals buried in wealthy graves was underpinned by the production of a transferable agricultural surplus as might be expected. Throughout the early Anglo-Saxon period most of the buildings on settlements were either *Grubenhäuser* or small post-built timber halls, and although there are occasional variations in size and

¹ Brooks, 'The Creation and Early Structure of the Kingdom of Kent'; Henig, 'The Fate of Late Roman Towns'.

² Geake, *The Use of Grave Goods*; Geake 'Invisible Kingdoms'.

³ Härke, 'Cemeteries as Places of Power'.

⁴ Bassett, 'In Search of the Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms'; Carver, 'Kingship and Material Culture'.

construction technique, structures rarely differ enough to warrant assignment of exceptional status.⁵ Similarly, the environmental evidence from excavated early Saxon settlements suggests a return to more traditional farming systems, with a greater emphasis on pastoralism over arable exploitation.⁶

Within this overarching trend the economies and cultural interactions on rural sites of the early Saxon period were no doubt diverse,⁷ yet there is little indication that the yield from rural communities was the primary source of elite wealth at this time. The inability of rural societies of the period to produce a consistent surplus is reflected in the adoption by early English kings of an itinerant lifestyle, travelling on circuit to extract episodic renders from estates and thus sharing the burden of sustaining a royal entourage across a broad geographical area.⁸ The royal polities that came to dominate the early history of Anglo-Saxon England thus grew via means other than the acquisition of transferable farming produce, and in this context it is useful to recall the relationship between political power and the agrarian economy during the late Iron Age. In the last centuries before the Roman conquest too, it was not agricultural surplus from their own estates but produce and tribute from the people of subject territories that supported ruling elites and formed the basis of power and wealth. This so-called 'extensive overlordship' was also exercised by early Saxon kings and was based upon power exerted over territories rather than estates, as the outright ownership and direct power over land held by elites in the earliest medieval centuries was initially slow to develop.⁹

The Middle Saxon Period: The Changing Face of Elite Power

Whereas extensive overlordship emerged as the primary power base of the early English kings, from as early as the seventh century it is possible to see more exploitative relationships between powerful landowners and servile peasants. That it was possible to burden peasant communities more heavily was partly a result of agricultural intensification in the rural countryside that was taking place across much of north-west Europe.¹⁰ Central to the physical extraction of

⁵ Ulmschneider, 'Settlement Hierarchy', p. 157.

⁶ Dark, *The Environment of Britain*, pp. 22–28.

⁷ Hamerow, *Early Medieval Settlements*, pp. 4–5.

⁸ Wickham, 'Problems of Comparing Rural Societies', pp. 233–35.

⁹ Faith, *The English Peasantry*, pp. 5–8.

¹⁰ Hooke, 'Overview: Rural Production', p. 316.

these greater surpluses was the development of more coherent estate structures, a process which itself is reflective of a broader trend towards formal articulation of the landscape amongst English society from *c.* 600.¹¹ When attempting to trace the origin and functioning of such early estates, it is immediately apparent that most of the surviving written sources relate to the lands held by major ministers, an all-encompassing term used to describe various types of early church community. Whilst such a bias in the documentary material presents the risk that ecclesiastical land organization is viewed as typical of the functioning of all early medieval land units, what little evidence we do have relating to secular powers suggests that elites across the board structured their lands in similar fashion, with estate centres surrounded by a network of specialized dependent settlements.¹² The most prevalent indication of such acutely managed agricultural regimes is the preservation of the names of settlements once tied to estate centres: names such as Butterley are likely to indicate places geared towards the production of butter, and similarly Shipton probably rendered sheep to its associated high-status centre.¹³

That secular and ecclesiastical authorities organized their territories in comparable fashion should not come as a surprise when the royal context of church foundation is considered. The rewarding of land rights has in the past been seen as the peak of the exchanges which characterized the early Saxon retainer-lord relationship,¹⁴ but the vast increase of surviving records of royal endowments towards the Church during the last three decades of the seventh century more likely represents a step-change in the existing character of political power. After the ending of Roman administration, royal power was likely to have ultimately been derived from military might, and although the position of kings as military leaders continued to hold significance throughout the Anglo-Saxon period, warfare was ultimately a costly and unstable way of organizing power relationships.¹⁵ The rapidly expanding societies of Anglo-Saxon England during the fifth and sixth centuries were thus capable of political integration to

¹¹ Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, pp. 52, 252.

¹² Jones, 'Multiple Estates and Early Settlement'.

¹³ Hallam, 'England before the Norman Conquest'; Faith *The English Peasantry*; Fox, 'Butter Place-names and Transhumance'.

¹⁴ Charles-Edwards, 'The Distinction between Land and Moveable Wealth'; Yorke, 'The Adaptation of Anglo-Saxon Courts'.

¹⁵ Goody, *Technology, Tradition, and the State in Africa*; DeMarrais and others, 'Ideology, Materialisation and Power Strategies'.

the extent that would support local chieftains, primarily through victory on the battlefield, but the establishment and maintenance of more permanent power over greater geographical areas required the development of more varied ideological and economic frameworks.¹⁶

From the early seventh century, elite groups would have become increasingly aware that strategies other than martial authority were required for the consolidation of their social power, a need that was met by the Augustinian Church with its diverse package of cultural imports. As a hierarchical religion offering normative regulation and permanent record through writing, Christianity was exceptionally attractive to rulers hoping to exert broader and more lasting political power.¹⁷ For the early English kings, the granting of land to the Church (sometimes known as 'bookland') was used as a means of endowing leading kindreds and sub-noble personages. Such gifts strengthened horizontal ties between elites, whilst also reinforcing vertical relations by carefully assigning roles to individuals as patrons or leading clerics. In some ways, kings who granted land were actually giving property to themselves, with the added bonus of protecting their endowments with the immensely privileged form of tenure associated with gifts to the Church.¹⁸ For the early English kings, the continental Church thus offered the potential to materialize the ideology of authority, stabilizing power relations and helping to counteract the tendency for expanding polities to fragment into smaller units.¹⁹ Ultimately, minsters were a crucial medium to preserve and consolidate royal power, and one which was commonly founded, sustained, and populated by royal and sub-royal individuals.²⁰

The Church and the Land

Of course, ideological motivations were unlikely the primary reason behind the English conversion, and there is a growing body of evidence which suggests that elites were acutely aware of the more exploitative economic arrangements characteristic of ecclesiastical culture. Whereas early medieval law codes suggest that

¹⁶ Scull, 'Social Archaeology and Anglo-Saxon Kingdom Origins'.

¹⁷ Urbańczyk, 'The Politics of Conversion'.

¹⁸ Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils*, pp. 67–69; Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, p. 90.

¹⁹ DeMarrais and others, 'Ideology, Materialisation and Power Strategies', p. 31.

²⁰ Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*.



Map 11.1.
Map of southern
England, showing the
main places discussed
in the text. Map by
José Carlos Sánchez-
Pardo using Demis
WMS World Map.

royal households maintained their peripatetic lifestyle until at least *c.* 850 with the economy of the food-circuit provisioning well-established models of aristocratic life, from the earliest generations of the Augustinian Church it appears that members of the clergy remained more static, requiring supplies to be delivered to them.²¹ The notable exception to this pattern were the bishops, who frequently travelled around their diocese and are likely to have developed a supply system more common to that of secular lords.²² The establishment of minsters therefore placed unique obligations upon rural communities, demanding for the first time that peasants supply their lords with a regular rather than sporadic stream of surplus foodstuffs. The new economic conditions created by clerical populations required more rigorous approaches to farming, resulting in the development of more dynamic exploitation of the countryside. Although the picture of elite land use that can be painted from the written material is rather opaque, a growing body of archaeological and topographic evidence suggests that the stable character of monastic communities led to the development of unique settle-

²¹ Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, p. 252.

²² Faith, *The English Peasantry*, p. 15.

ment forms on monastic estates. For the social elite, surplus-producing regimes not only offered the chance to sustain specific ecclesiastical populations, but also represented an economy which could diversify the existing warfare-reliant powerbase, allowing the consolidation of leadership through control, allocation, and procurement of agricultural resources.²³ The social capital, namely labour, invested in the establishment and maintenance of ecclesiastical groups also enabled the elite to materialize the ideology of existing power relations, as Christian ideology legitimized the concept of divinely appointed leaders, creating solidarity and social cohesion amongst communities that would otherwise be liable to fragment as kingdoms expanded. Increasingly sophisticated agricultural regimes therefore signify not only a means by which more permanent elite populations could be sustained, but a marked shift in the economic and ideological basis of power relations in early medieval England. Investigating the way settlements on early monastic estates were developed and utilized thus offers us the chance to better understand the crucial process of transition from elites deriving their power from 'extensive overlordship' to exact tribute, and the fully fledged manorial system so clearly apparent by the time of Domesday.²⁴

The Archaeology of Monastic Dependencies

Over the last two decades archaeologists have become increasingly aware of changes that occurred in rural settlement character from the Middle Saxon period. Together with new forms of agricultural regime, from the seventh century there is a growing prominence of boundaries and other enclosures on the majority of habitation sites.²⁵ In a seminal paper published in 2003, Andrew Reynolds categorized settlements based on enclosure type and related the increase in bounded space to rapidly changing social conditions.²⁶ Given that rural settlements all over England appear to have undergone transformation, it is challenging for scholars to ascribe particular agency to the changes detected in the archaeological sequence. Nevertheless, there is a growing body of evidence which suggests that the Church was particularly concerned with the establishment and maintenance of demesne-type farms which could sustain their non-producing permanent populations. Taking two examples of impor-

²³ DeMarrais and others, 'Ideology, Materialisation and Power Strategies', pp. 28–31.

²⁴ Wickham, 'The Other Transition', p. 31.

²⁵ Reynolds, 'Boundaries and Settlements'; Hamerow, *Rural Settlements and Society*, p. 163.

²⁶ Reynolds, 'Boundaries and Settlements'.

tant early minsters at Malmesbury and Ely (Map 11.1) this paper will demonstrate the way in which clerics founded dependent settlements on their estates, the form and function of which enabled elites to articulate new forms of power founded on agricultural production.

Located on the Cotswold scarp of north-west Wiltshire, the historic town of Malmesbury occupies a steep-sided triangular promontory on the north bank of the Sherston and Tetbury branches of the Bristol Avon. Developed as a *burh* and emerging as an important centre by the Late Saxon period, there are few sources with which to characterize Malmesbury's early history. The foundation tradition of Malmesbury Abbey, recorded in the twelfth-century *Eulogium Historiarum*, describes how an Irish monk named *Maeldulph* or *Malidub* came to a fortified *castellum* called *Caer Bladon* in the early to mid-seventh century.²⁷ Although the *Eulogium* is a document of much later origin, the existence of a fortification recorded there is supported by archaeological evidence from the town. Excavation along Nun's Walk, situated on the eastern line of the town wall, recovered evidence that the defences originated as a hill-fort. A combination of ceramic and radiocarbon analysis demonstrated that a substantial earthwork was first constructed in the early Iron Age, upon which the later town wall was constructed. Although excavation has been limited to the eastern part of the town, it is likely that the prehistoric monument enclosed the whole promontory in order to make the site defensible.²⁸

The practical and symbolic importance of enclosed space for early ecclesiastical communities is well recognized,²⁹ and in the case of Malmesbury it appears that the extant hillfort defences were chosen for settlement from as early as the seventh century. A number of other archaeological indicators for pre-*burh* activity have also been recovered, including 'Early-Middle Saxon' organic-tempered wares found in various locations, and a penny probably minted under the reign of Cynewulf of Mercia (757–86) identified in the matrix of a buried cobbled path in the historic core of the town.³⁰ After the abandonment of the bishopric at Dorchester-upon-Thames by the tribe known as the *Gewisse* in the 660s, north Wiltshire formed part of a hotly disputed

²⁷ Haslam, *Anglo-Saxon Towns in Southern England*, p. 111; Yorke, *Wessex in the Early Middle Ages*, pp. 162–63; Kelly, *Charters of Malmesbury Abbey*.

²⁸ Longman, 'Iron Age and Later Defences at Malmesbury'; Collard and Harvard, 'The Prehistoric and Medieval Defences of Malmesbury'.

²⁹ Blair, 'Anglo-Saxon Minsters', p. 232; Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, pp. 196–99.

³⁰ Wessex Archaeology, *High Voltage Cable Trench, Malmesbury*.

political frontier which also stretched into Berkshire and north Somerset. The importance of the wider region is reflected by the grants of land to Malmesbury Abbey by both royal houses from the later seventh century, with a number of estates such as Tockenham and Puton passing between West Saxon and Mercian control throughout the eighth century.³¹ According to an account of William of Malmesbury, Aldhelm, who was appointed Bishop in 675, even had to obtain special privileges for the minster for fear that the continuing conflict could jeopardize the future of the establishment, although it is equally possible that the historian is guilty of back-projecting twelfth-century aspirations.³²

An undeniably important centre as early as the seventh century, the minster at Malmesbury was likely situated within the estate of 'Brokenborough', recorded in two tenth-century charters,³³ which also probably equates to the later demesne lands of the *burh*.³⁴ Whilst delineating the exact extents of Malmesbury's early holdings presents numerous difficulties, archaeological investigation of a site near Cowage Farm, Bremilham, located only 2.5 km south-west of the town, demonstrates the way in which the unique demands of ecclesiastical lordship shaped the character of dependent settlements. Cropmarks detectable on aerial photographs first recognized a settlement complex around the banks of the Sherston branch of the river Avon in 1975, which prompted further investigation including geophysical survey and limited excavation of the site.³⁵ At the core of the settlement is a cluster of rectangular timber buildings, arranged within rectilinear enclosures and focused around a large central hall (Structure B) (Figure 11.1). To the east of this central group is an east–west aligned building (Structure A), located within its own enclosure and possessing what seems to be a semicircular annexe on its eastern end. The structure surely represents a church, the form of which is very similar to the seventh-century stone and timber church at St Paul-in-the-Bail, Lincoln.³⁶ Structures A and B, in addition to a number of the smaller structures, were both subject to partial excavation in 1983 which revealed the use of post-in-pit construction. A single radiocarbon date from the charcoal fill of one of these smaller features

³¹ Kelly, *Charters of Malmesbury*, pp. 3–6.

³² Haslam, *Anglo-Saxon Towns in Southern England*, p. 114.

³³ Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, nos 629 and 1577.

³⁴ Kelly, *Charters of Malmesbury*, pp. 230–31.

³⁵ Hinchliffe, 'An Early Medieval Settlement at Cowage Farm'.

³⁶ Gilmour, 'The Anglo-Saxon Church at St Paul-in-the-Bail, Lincoln'; Hinchliffe, 'An Early Medieval Settlement at Cowage Farm', pp. 252–53.



Figure 11.1. Plan of features at Cowage Farm, Bremilham, based on aerial photographs and the results of geophysical survey. Source: Hinchliffe, 'An Early Medieval Settlement at Cowage Farm', fig. 1.

(Structure C) produced a date range between the mid-sixth and mid-seventh centuries, although the morphology of the site suggests that there were at least two phases of building.³⁷

The combined investigations undertaken at Cowage Farm have thus revealed a rural settlement located in close proximity to the documented minster at Malmesbury, and occupied from the late sixth or early seventh century. The rectilinear configuration of the Cowage Farm complex, comprising a series of buildings and enclosures arranged around a central structure, suggests a significant degree of settlement planning. Settlements exhibiting a degree of spatial ordering are not unknown on rural settlements of the seventh century, such as Yeavering in Northumbria, where buildings and monuments appeared to have been aligned on a west–east axis.³⁸ In the Wessex region, too, the exca-

³⁷ Hinchliffe, 'An Early Medieval Settlement at Cowage Farm', pp. 250–53.

³⁸ Hope-Taylor, *Yeavering*, fig. 60.

vated halls and enclosures at Cowdery's Down exhibit elements of planning, although unlike Yeavinger occupation at the Hampshire site seems to have been orientated on two directional axes.³⁹ The settlement at Cowage Farm, however, appears to have been arranged more rigorously than many contemporary rural sites, and is also distinguished by its apsidal-ended church. Susan Kelly has argued that the 'hundred-hide of Brokenborough' was, during the period of occupation at the Cowage Farm complex, an estate associated with a *villa regalis* which was only later ceded to the minster at Malmesbury.⁴⁰ In Kelly's model, the Cowage Farm site would likely be interpreted as a royal centre, perhaps one of several that lay within the extensive Middle Saxon estate that was later transferred to the Church. Whilst such a hypothesis cannot be wholly disregarded, the distinctive appearance of the Cowage Farm site can in fact be more convincingly interpreted as a semi-monastic cell with a largely agrarian remit.⁴¹

The size and stability of the minster at Malmesbury, established as early as the first decades of the seventh century, would have required exceptional provisioning needs from the outset which were unlikely to have been met purely by the food-renders inherited with their newly acquired Brokenborough estate. Rather, it appears that in order to sustain their lifestyle the religious community at Malmesbury rapidly sought to exploit their immediate agricultural hinterland in more systematic fashion by establishing semi-monastic dependent farms, of which the Cowage Farm site is likely one. Located less than 3 km to the south-west of the hillfort ramparts utilized by the minster and accessible by water, the Cowage Farm settlement is likely to have operated in a similar way to a demesne farm, perhaps worked by monastic brethren with a semi-dependent status.⁴² The degree of settlement planning detected at the downstream Cowage Farm site is also indicative of ecclesiastical lordship, with sites under secular ownership only adopting such systematic approaches in the post-Viking period. Indeed, it is plausible that the settlement at Cowage Farm was actually laid out on precisely surveyed grids, using techniques derived from the Roman *agrimensores*.⁴³

³⁹ Millett and James, 'Excavations at Cowdery's Down'; Reynolds, 'Boundaries and Settlements', p. 106.

⁴⁰ Kelly, *Charters of Malmesbury*, p. 231.

⁴¹ Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, p. 214.

⁴² Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, pp. 213 and 255; Fleming, 'Land Use and People', p. 22.

⁴³ Blair, 'Grid-Planning in Anglo-Saxon Settlements'.

The evidence from Cowage Farm therefore suggests that the church community at Malmesbury encouraged a more rigorous and exploitative approach to estate management through the establishment of at least one demesne farm (and likely many more which have yet to be located). The distinctive character of ecclesiastical lordship influenced the economic outlook and structural arrangement of the settlement, possibly planned with the use of surveyed grids which themselves were most likely the preserve of religious communities in England before the ninth century.⁴⁴ Such approaches to the structuring of settlement and landscape represent a vital component of the materialization of elite power increasingly discernible through the Middle Saxon period. Combined with the new ideology of Christianity, the more rigorous ordering of the countryside detectable from the early seventh century no doubt enabled leading authorities to shape and consolidate perceptions of social order.⁴⁵ The status of individuals would from now on be manifest in the landscape, with each allotted a physical space within a planned settlement relevant to their standing in society. At the top of the pyramid were of course kings, benefiting not only through receiving the greater yields stimulated by minsters, but also through the materialization of a social hierarchy which considered their insuperable position divinely appointed.

A comparable situation is also detectable in Cambridgeshire, where the early important minster at Ely was similarly supported by a dependent settlement located on their demesne. Situated in the Peat Fen which characterizes much of northern and central Cambridgeshire, the Isle of Ely is made up of clay and gravels which form a low rise in an otherwise largely flat landscape. Well before the early medieval period, fen-islands such as Ely already represented a focus for human activity: artefactual assemblages dating as far back as the Mesolithic period have been recovered in and around the modern town, and during the Iron Age and Romano-British period the larger islands in the fen appear to have been exploited on a seasonal basis.⁴⁶ Throughout the medieval period, however, occupation was intensified leading to the emergence of Ely as the centre of one of the most industrious and powerful minsters in the country. The *Liber Eliensis* suggests that the abbey was founded as a double house by Æthelthryth in the middle of the seventh century, apparently located 1.5 km away from the enigmatic centre of *Cratendune*.⁴⁷ Within the modern town-

⁴⁴ Blair, 'Grid-Planning in Anglo-Saxon Settlements'.

⁴⁵ Hamerow, *Rural Settlements and Society in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 121–25.

⁴⁶ Hall, *The Fenland Project*, pp. 6–7.

⁴⁷ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. by Garmonsway, pp. 34–35.

scape of Ely, it is not certain whether the pre-Conquest house was situated on the site of the existing abbey, and St Mary's church and the Hospital of St John the Baptist have both been suggested as possible alternatives.⁴⁸

Whilst the early history of Ely is recorded by Bede and the *Liber Eliensis*, until 1990 there was little archaeological evidence on the island for the Middle Saxon ecclesiastical community or any associated settlement. Over the past two decades, however, a series of archaeological excavations has yielded evidence for early medieval activity within the modern town. Few structural features relating to the pre-Conquest settlement have been located so far, but Ipswich Ware has been recovered from limited excavations at St Mary's Lodge, Chapel Street, and Chief's Street. An evaluation trench south of the Lady Chapel also identified a large pit, within which was found the largest quantity of Ipswich Ware from an inland location outside of Norfolk or Suffolk.⁴⁹ These investigations strongly suggest that the current site of Ely Abbey and its immediate environs was a focus for Middle Saxon activity, and probably represents the general location of the earliest minster. Whilst the presence of an early and important ecclesiastical community at Ely is attested by written sources, and gradually also by material evidence, more extensive archaeological excavations to the west of the town have revealed a complex site which can almost certainly be identified as a demesne farm of the early minster.

Located approximately 1 km to the north-west of the present cathedral, interventions to the south of West Fen Road in 1999 first identified a detailed sequence of early medieval and later archaeological deposits.⁵⁰ A more recently published investigation has also revealed parts of the same complex, demonstrating that settlement extended to the north of the main road.⁵¹ The recovery of Ipswich Ware, coupled with a lack of organic-tempered pottery finds, from both sites suggests that occupation was first established in the eighth century. A single penny found at the more southerly 'Ashwell' site was dated to c. 730–40, thus also suggesting an early to mid-eighth-century period for initial settlement. The earliest eighth-century activity identified at the Ashwell site was partly influenced by pre-existing Romano-British earthworks, but otherwise occupation was on a wholly new arrangement, with a series of shallow, ditched paddocks and more substantial enclosures ordered around a central

⁴⁸ Keynes, 'Ely Abbey, 672–1109', p. 32.

⁴⁹ Mortimer, Roderick, and Lucy, *The Saxon and Medieval Settlement at West Fen Road*, p. 2.

⁵⁰ Mortimer, Roderick, and Lucy, *The Saxon and Medieval Settlement at West Fen Road*, p. 2.

⁵¹ Mudd and Webster, *Iron Age and Middle-Saxon Settlements at West Fen Road*.

trackway. A number of the enclosures, which were likely enhanced by hedges or fences, possessed post-built structures probably representing a combination of domestic and agricultural buildings. In addition to a total of at least six occupied enclosures and internal structures, two large empty enclosures to the south were identified, and interpreted as paddocks for cattle herding.⁵²

The settlement arrangement identified at the Ashwell site has been supplemented by further excavation to the north of West Fen Road, at the 'Consortium' site.⁵³ Also excavated in 1999, the details of the 1.5 ha open area were not published until more recently, but it is clear that the two excavations identified part of the same settlement complex. Similar to the Ashwell site, Ipswich Ware pottery from the Consortium excavation suggested that Middle Saxon settlement was confined to the *c.* 725–850 period, within which two main phases of activity were identified: Phase I in which the basic site layout was established, and Phase II when minor modifications were made. A large boundary ditch in the western part of the site formed the side of a series of apparent tenement plots defined by east–west and north–south ditches. This structure gives the general impression that the enclosure network was orientated around a north–west track to the east of the excavated area: it would appear that this track led south to the west–east orientated track excavated on the Ashwell site. Indeed, the routeway identified at the Ashwell site appears to have curved to the north, further supporting the premise that the two tracks were connected.⁵⁴

Intriguingly, it appears that the eighth-century settlement complex at West Fen Road was laid out on the basis of standard gridded measures in the same way as Cowage Farm. John Blair has identified two successive phases of gridding at West Fen Road, the first adapted from existing Romano-British features, and the second planned on a slightly different alignment.⁵⁵ From the mid-ninth century the settlement plan was modified further, becoming progressively less regular than the form of the earlier gridded phases, until the eventual abandonment of the entire site during the fifteenth century.⁵⁶ Situated only 1 km from the very centre of one of the richest and most powerful 'dou-

⁵² Mortimer, Roderick, and Lucy, *The Saxon and Medieval Settlement at West Fen Road*, pp. 25–32.

⁵³ Mudd and Webster, *Iron Age and Middle-Saxon Settlements at West Fen Road*.

⁵⁴ Mortimer, Roderick, and Lucy, *The Saxon and Medieval Settlement at West Fen Road*, p. 30; Mudd and Webster, *Iron Age and Middle-Saxon Settlements at West Fen Road*, pp. 28–31.

⁵⁵ Blair, 'Grid-Planning in Anglo-Saxon Settlements'.

⁵⁶ Mudd and Webster, *Iron Age and Middle-Saxon Settlements at West Fen Road*, pp. 25–32.

ble houses' in eastern England, of the sites presented here the West Fen Road settlement most convincingly associates grid planning with monastic agency, at least during the pre-Viking period. The environmental evidence from West Fen Road indicates that the site was operating a mixed farming economy, but one which was also geared to large-scale production:⁵⁷ exactly what might be expected from a demesne farm. Whilst not located on a navigable river, situated at only 4 m above sea level the West Fen Road settlement would have been on the edge of the Isle of Ely before reclamation of the surrounding fens. It is therefore not improbable that the site was also accessible by water, although the relative proximity of minster and dependency would have made overland transport less problematic than between Malmesbury and Cowage Farm.

The two excavations at West Fen Road have thus revealed an early medieval settlement which bears strikingly close parallels to the situation presented in north Wiltshire: located in close proximity to a rich and powerful minster, which documentary sources suggest may have been founded as early as the 670s, the agricultural settlement was tasked with producing a mixed surplus for the neighbouring ecclesiastical community from the early eighth century. In terms of portable material culture, West Fen Road during the eighth and early ninth centuries looks much the same as many other rural settlements of the period: the assemblage of prosaic equipment and unremarkable pottery indicating that it was most likely occupied by a peasant population. The additional aspect of settlement planning, however, most likely reveals the identity of those behind the establishment and development of the West Fen Road site, and confirms the hypothesis that it was a demesne farm of the ecclesiastical community at Ely in the Middle Saxon period. As this paper has demonstrated, the structuring of pre-Viking rural settlements according to gridded measures is most reasonably associated with monastic agents, whose patrons demonstrated an almost addictive desire to materialize their power through utilization of Roman material goods and artistic representation.⁵⁸

Conclusion

This paper has explored the changing character of social power in early medieval England, and particularly the way in which the Church was used as a means of materializing elite authority. Focusing on the archaeological evidence from

⁵⁷ Mudd and Webster, *Iron Age and Middle-Saxon Settlements at West Fen Road*, pp. 33–36.

⁵⁸ Blair, 'Grid-Planning in Anglo-Saxon Settlements'.

settlements and landscapes has revealed the way in which elite power shifted from a tribute-orientated regime which typified the earliest medieval centuries, to authority which was based upon agricultural exploitation. Understanding the mechanisms behind this so-called 'other transition' has hitherto been understood largely through documentary analysis, despite the fragmentary nature of pre-Viking written sources. The archaeological evidence presented by this paper substantiates the idea that monastics were central to the initial development of sophisticated estate networks; it is probable that the uniquely permanent character of religious communities, who unlike royal entourages of the period required a regular supply of foodstuffs, was behind the early proliferation of demesne farms tied to minsters. It must be remembered, however, that minsters were invariably founded and populated by the secular elite, and there can be little doubt that emerging agricultural arrangements were targeted as a way of shifting the economic foundation of royal power towards more firm foundations rooted in systematic exploitation of the landscape.

Such exploitation resulted in the development of features particular to dependent farms. The stability of monastic groups was in turn reflected in the character of the rural communities which supported them, and with greater settlement permanence also came increased concern with structuring occupation.⁵⁹ The development of permanent and highly organized settlements on Church lands represents an extension of the Christian ideology of the Church, with the status of individuals defined in the landscape, with each allotted a physical space within a planned settlement relevant to their standing within society. The potential that the arrangement of demesne farms may have been based upon gridded measures which themselves were developed from the techniques of *agrimensores* presents the remarkable possibility that communities were subject to a form of *Romanitas* imposed by monastic agents obsessed with the materializing authority of Rome. The environmental evidence available from West Fen Road does not suggest specialization towards particular resources as might be expected, but economies were instead geared to create a surplus of numerous products. The production of these large quantities of goods likely explains the geographical setting of the farms identified by this paper; the riverside location of Cowage Farm was crucially upstream from its parent minster, facilitating the transportation of agricultural renders. The site at West Fen Road was far closer to its estate centre, although being located

⁵⁹ See the essay by José Carlos Sánchez-Pardo in this volume on the role of churches and monasteries in the agrarian and settlement expansion in early medieval Galicia.

on the fringes of the Isle of Ely it remains possible that it was also accessible by water. Taken together, this consistent group of attributes demonstrates a greater concern towards exploitation of the landscape which was central to shifting the economic basis of elite authority. Far from providing a purely economic basis for kingship, however, the establishment of dependent settlements also consolidated royal power in the countryside as part of far more significant social changes which saw the continental Church materialize the ideology of the English elite from the late sixth century.

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POWERS, TERRITORIES, AND ARCHITECTURE IN NORTH-WEST PORTUGAL: AN APPROACH TO THE CHRISTIAN LANDSCAPES OF BRAGA BETWEEN THE FIFTH AND ELEVENTH CENTURIES

Luís Fontes

Introduction

In the last twenty years, increased historical and archaeological research on the Portuguese territory between the fifth and eleventh centuries has come to light. This period corresponds to the formation of the Suevic and Visigothic Kingdoms in the fifth century, the Islamic occupation of the southern part of the Iberian Peninsula between the eighth and fifteenth centuries, and the emergence of the Christian kingdoms in the north in the ninth and tenth centuries. In contrast to the traditional ‘historical empty gap’, it is now recognized that this was a period of complex social processes that can be traced in the archaeological record.¹

In the case of northern Portugal, traditional historiographical models based on the concepts of ‘barbarization’, ‘strategic abandonment’, and ‘reconquest’ are being overturned. The transition from late antiquity to the Middle Ages

¹ See, among others, Mattoso, *História de Portugal*, I, II; Serrão and Oliveira Marques, *Nova História de Portugal*, II; López Quiroga, *El final de la Antigüedad en la Gallaecia*; Bowes and Kulikovskiy, *Hispania in Late Antiquity*; Ferreiro, *The Visigoths in Gaul and Iberia*; Corfis and Harris-Northall, *Medieval Iberia: Changing Societies*; Cameron, Ward-Perkins, and Whitby, *The Cambridge Ancient History*, XIV.

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is increasingly regarded as having its own characteristics, balancing insularity with external contacts, and conservatism with innovation. The basis for this reinterpretation is mid-twentieth-century studies of the main early medieval documentary sources for what is now northern Portugal, the *Liber Fidei Sanctae Bracarensis Ecclesiae*, and the *Inter Lima et Ave* census (commonly known as 'the Census of Bishop Peter').² Latterly, study of the Braga cartulary has focused on the social and economic organization of rural areas.³

Archaeological investigation in this area has progressed since pioneering work took place in the 1960s and 1970s into medieval roads, architecture, and fortifications.⁴ There are analytical inventories of cemeteries, architectural elements, and medieval epigraphy between the Douro and Minho Rivers, and the late antique capitals and early medieval decorative elements of Portugal have been analysed.⁵ Portugal between the sixth and the eleventh centuries has been newly synthesized from an art-historical perspective, articulating historical sources with archaeological data.⁶ The Christian architecture of the period has traditionally been classified as 'palaeo-Christian', 'Visigothic', or 'Mozarabic',⁷ but archaeological approaches of recent decades have moved beyond these art-historical models.⁸

The creation of the Unit of Archaeology of the University of Minho in 1977 precipitated the systematic development of medieval archaeology in the Braga region and greatly expanded our knowledge of the late antique and early medieval city of Braga itself. New sites such as the early medieval wall and parts

² David, *Études Historiques*; Costa, *Liber Fidei Sanctae Bracarensis Ecclesiae*; Costa, *O Bispo D. Pedro e a Organização*.

³ Marques, 'O Casal: uma unidade de organização social'; Amaral, 'Formação e desenvolvimento do domínio da diocese de Braga'.

⁴ Ferreira de Almeida, 'Vias Medievais de Entre Douro e Minho'; Ferreira de Almeida, 'Arquitectura Românica de Entre Douro e Minho'; Ferreira de Almeida, 'Castelologia Medieval de Entre Douro e Minho'; Fontes, 'Arqueologia Medieval Portuguesa'.

⁵ Barroca, 'Necrópoles e Sepulturas Medievais'; Barroca, 'Contribuição para o Estudo dos Testemunhos Pré-Românicos', 1, 101–45; Barroca, *Epigrafia Medieval Portuguesa (862–1422)*; Limão, 'Capitéis da Antiguidade Tardia'; Arezes, *Elementos de Adorno Altomedievicos*.

⁶ Real, 'Inovação e Resistência'; Real, 'Portugal: cultura visigoda'; Real, 'A escultura decorativa em Portugal'.

⁷ Fontaine, *L'art préroman hispanique*; Schlunk and Hauschild, *Hispania Antiqua*.

⁸ Kingsley, 'Visigothic Architecture in Spain and Portugal'; Dodds, *Architecture and Ideology*; Caballero Zoreda, '¿Visigodo o Asturiano?'; Utrero Agudo, 'Las Iglesias cruciformes del siglo VII', Utrero Agudo, 'Late-Antique and Early Medieval Hispanic Churches'.



Map 12.1.
Map of north-west
Portugal, showing the
main places discussed
in the text. Map by
José Carlos Sánchez-
Pardo using Demis
WMS World Map.

of the first Christian basilica of the city have been uncovered,⁹ and research has extended to the Braga region in this period, particularly in terms of architecture, sculpture, castles, monasteries, ceramic production, and settlement.¹⁰ This

⁹ Ribeiro, 'Braga entre a época romana e a Idade Moderna'; Martins and Fontes, 'Bracara Augusta: Balanço de 30 anos'; Fontes, Lemos, and Cruz, 'Mais Velho que a Sé de Braga'.

¹⁰ Central to this have been inventories of the epigraphic and architectonic collections of the Pius XII Museum in Braga, excavations of Penafiel de Bastuço, Lindoso, and Cantelães castles, excavations in the monasteries of St Martin of Dume and Tibães, and studies of pottery sequences. See Fontes and Pereira, *Colecção de Epigrafia e de Arquitectura Medievais*; Fontes and others, *Colecção de Epigrafia e de Arquitectura Antigas*; Fontes and Regalo, 'O "castelo" de Penafiel de Bastuço', pp. 199–220; Fontes and Regalo, *Lindoso: O castelo e a região*; Fontes and Roriz, *O Castro-Castelo de Vieira*; Fontes, 'Salvamento Arqueológico de Dume (Braga)'; Fontes, *A Basílica Suevo de Dume*; Fontes, 'A igreja sueva de São Martinho de Dume'; Fontes, *Tibães: um sítio onde se fez um mosteiro*; Fontes and Gaspar, 'Cerâmicas da região de Braga na transição'; Gaspar, 'Cerâmicas cinzentas da Antiguidade Tardia'; Carvalho, 'O povoamento romano na fachada ocidental'.

has revolutionized our understanding of the historical evolution of the city of Braga and its region.¹¹

Based on these recent advances, this paper aims to identify and understand the socio-political evolution of early medieval Braga through its early churches, placing them in the morphology and topography of the town and its region, and interpreting them as centres and channels of social power in the early medieval landscape (Map 12.1).

Approaching the Historical Context

The period between the fifth and tenth centuries in the Braga region — as in the rest of the north-west Iberian peninsula — was one of transition, characterized by the crystallization of new powers and the definition of several territories. Braga was the central place of the north-west peninsula in the late antique period: it was a Roman provincial capital, an episcopal see — the *Sedis Bracarensis* — from the end of the third century, and it became capital of the Suevic Kingdom in the fifth and sixth centuries.¹²

The invasion and looting of Braga in 585 by King Leovigildo (568–86) ended the Suevic Kingdom and brought the region under Visigothic domination, with its political and administrative centre in Toledo. Braga's substrate population appears to have remained substantially unchanged along with its administrative and ecclesiastical territories, which had been firmly established during the reforms of St Martin of Dume in the sixth century.¹³ Although Braga lost political relevance, it appears to have retained important civil and religious functions, and to have maintained the status of civil capital and ecclesiastical head of the metropolitan *Gallaecia Provinciae*. Its urban nucleus remained occupied as a result, with many of its social functions intact.

¹¹ Fontes, 'O Período Suévico e Visigótico'; Fontes, 'Braga e o norte de Portugal em torno a 711'; Fontes, 'O Norte de Portugal entre os séculos VIII e X'; Fontes, 'O norte de Portugal entre os séculos V e XI'; Fontes and others, 'A cidade de Braga e o seu território nos séculos V–VII'. Ongoing archaeological investigations will provide more information about fifth- to eleventh-century socio-economic conditions, property organization, settlement organization, and the structuring of the landscape over the next few years.

¹² The emergence of the Suevic Kingdom and the associated organization action of the Church as led by St Martin of Dume are perhaps two of the most significant expressions of socio-cultural vitality of the populations of north-western Iberia in this period. See Fontes, 'O Período Suévico e Visigótico', pp. 272–95.

¹³ Díaz, 'Extremi Mundi Partibus', pp. 210–11.

The documentary, archaeological, and toponymic sources attest a significant diversity of settlement in the north-west of the Iberian Peninsula between the fifth and eighth centuries, from farms to cities, albeit with a common maintenance of the Roman administrative model. Virtually all Suevic-Visigothic episcopal sees correspond to major Roman cities, maintaining their centrality in the landscape and showing a clear convergence between political, military, and religious powers. This is particularly clear in the relationship between the Church and the Suevic Kingdom, which was coherent with the metropolitan diocese of Braga. This convergence was behind the territorial reorganization and centralization of power undertaken by Bishop Martin of Braga (550–80), which appears to have been guided by a clear perception that religious unity was fundamental to the construction of political unity.¹⁴ This religious and political unity was underpinned by the local Galician-Roman elites, who adhered to the new Suevic and Visigothic power structures. These local elites, often representing ancient identities and autonomies in the social fabric of north-western Iberia, were present in both urban centres and rural areas. Through them, the alliances that sustained ecclesiastical and civil organizational structures were established.¹⁵ The council provisions of this period show a fully developed ecclesiastical organization, and numerous parishes and private churches indicate that the period between the fifth and the seventh centuries was one of continuous building by the Church, which has been confirmed by recent archaeological studies.¹⁶

Systematic and sustained territorial reorganization only took place from the second half of the ninth century, with the Asturian king Alfonso III, who in 873 ‘restored’ the city of Braga and its bounds, and in 905–10 confirmed its ownership by Bishop Flaviano Recaredo.¹⁷ From 711, the Arab domination of southern Iberia had been accompanied by political and administrative disarticulation and a reduction in population. Nevertheless, the city of Braga and its diocese in northern Portugal remained populated during the seventh and eighth centuries.¹⁸ Similarly, it appears that the expansion of the Asturian

¹⁴ Silva, *Monarquia e Igreja na Galiza na segunda metade do século VI*, p. 72.

¹⁵ Díaz, *El reino suevo (411–585)*.

¹⁶ Fontes, ‘O Período Suévico e Visigótico’; Fontes, ‘Braga e o norte de Portugal’; Fontes, ‘O Norte de Portugal entre os séculos VIII e X’.

¹⁷ Costa, *Liber Fidei*, I, 33–38.

¹⁸ Continuity is also confirmed by the activity of Bishop Odoário in the second half of the eighth century, indirectly documented in 1025. Costa, *Liber Fidei*, I, 44–61; Costa, *O Bispo D. Pedro e a Organização*, p. 48.

Leonese Kingdom in the ninth and tenth centuries — commonly labelled as a ‘reconquest’ — was instead determined by local socio-economic and military contexts.¹⁹ It is now generally accepted that the territory between the rivers Douro and Minho maintained a significant part of their populations without a supralocal political structure until the third quarter of the ninth century. From this period, this region was integrated into the political Galician-Asturian, Leonese, and ‘Portuguese’ structures. Many of the elites of these political structures can be identified in the documents of the period.²⁰

Thus, the ninth and tenth centuries show the emergence of a new settlement structure, organized around parishes and characterized by a hierarchy of churches, monasteries, and castles. Each of these elements fixed old settlements or originated new ones. Documentary sources indicate that this new territorial structure was based on the development of local elites, who profited due to their role as intermediaries between secular and religious life, and between local and regional powers. They strengthened the links between the Church, the monarchy, and the higher aristocracy, negotiating together the structure of Portuguese society at a local level in the new context of the ‘reconquest’ of the region by the Kingdom of Asturias.²¹ In this way the structure of Braga society anchored the otherwise dynamic changes in settlement patterns being undertaken by competitive local elites.²²

Braga: A Central Place in a Changing Landscape

In order to properly understand early medieval churches as indicators of social power, we need first to approach the wider social and landscape contexts in which they were created. This section aims to explore the churches of northern Portugal in connection with the transformation of the region’s landscape between the fifth and eleventh centuries, taking the city of Braga as the main centre of territorial articulation. A threefold approach will be adopted here, according to an increasing scale of analysis: the urban centre, its surroundings, and the whole region.

¹⁹ Costa, *O Bispo D. Pedro e a Organização*, pp. 195–211. See also José Carlos Sánchez-Pardo’s contribution to this volume for the neighbouring case of Galicia.

²⁰ Isla Frez, *La Sociedad Gallega*; Real, ‘A escultura decorativa em Portugal’, pp. 152–55.

²¹ Amaral, ‘Formação e desenvolvimento do domínio da diocese de Braga’, pp. 582–92.

²² Isla Frez, *La Sociedad Gallega*, p. 254.

The Urban Centre

During the fifth and sixth centuries dynamic economic activity and a significant population are archaeologically attested within the intramural area of the city of Braga, an area of about 45 hectares. However, during the seventh century both population and economic activity gradually concentrated in the city's north-east quadrant. Simultaneously there is an absence of evidence for upkeep of the south and west areas of the city, which became ruralized following the abandonment of the great Roman public buildings (Figure 12.1).

The originator of this reconfiguration of the urban topography is the cathedral built in the fifth century inside the late imperial walls, near the north-east boundary of the city, which incorporated existing Roman buildings. The archaeological record in the cathedral crypt reveals significant stretches of granite walling associated with a relatively long occupational sequence, in which stands a large building dating back to the fourth century. This building, which underwent several renovations, had a large rectangular plan oriented east–west and was floored with *opus signinum* mortar. Interior partition walls, pillars, and a doorway were also uncovered on the south façade. The remains indicate a building with three naves, resembling the early Christian basilica tradition.²³ It presumably represents the early cathedral of Santa Maria de Braga, which remained in use until the eleventh century, when it was demolished to make way for the new Romanesque cathedral, instigated by Bishop Peter, which finally broke with the plan of previous structures.²⁴ From the fifth century, the episcopal see was the true architectural symbol of Braga, whose religious and political life was unified in the figure of the bishop. It was probably also the location of the royal chancery of Alfonso III in 873, during the 'restoration' of the city of Braga.

Other urban churches do not offer any archaeological evidence datable to the fifth to tenth centuries, despite references to convents in the *Chronicle of Idácio* of AD 468.²⁵ The extramural chapel of St Sebastian is also likely to have been built during the fifth to tenth centuries, sacralizing the public space of the old Roman forum.

²³ Fontes, Lemos, and Cruz, 'Mais Velho que a Sé de Braga', p. 145.

²⁴ Real, 'O projecto da catedral de Braga'; Fontes, Lemos, and Cruz, 'Mais Velho que a Sé de Braga', p. 145.

²⁵ Idácio, *Crónica*, ed. by Cardoso; Hydace, *Chronique*, pp. 218–19; Idácio, *Crónica*, ed. by López Silva.



Figure 12.1a. The city of Braga in the sixth–eighth centuries.

- 1: Christian Church/Episcopal; 2: Suevic-Visigothic necropolis; 3: Abandoned Roman forum;
 4: Abandoned Roman public baths; 5: Abandoned Roman theatre;
 6: Abandoned Roman amphitheatre; 7: Roman necropolis. Figure by the author.

The city defences appear to have been replanned during this ‘restoration’ of the city, during its integration into the orbit of the Asturian and Leonese Kingdoms in the ninth and tenth centuries. This involved a significant reduction in the urban area, to just over 10 hectares. Reinterpretation of the archaeological data indicates that in the ninth and tenth centuries the city was surrounded to the south by a new wall which connected to the existing Roman defences, whose north-east section continued in use until the beginning of the fourteenth century. This southern new wall determined the establishment of new city gates, that to the south, adjacent to Campo de Santiago, and that to the south-east, adjacent to the San Marcos/Granjinhos area, prolonging the



Figure 12.1b. The city of Braga in the ninth–eleventh centuries.

- 1: Church of Sancte Marie Bracarense/Episcopal; 2: Church of Sancto Petro Maximinus;
3: Church of Sancti Clementi; 4: Wall and late medieval castle.

Figure by the author.

ancient connection to the cities of Guimarães/Merida. This reconfiguration of access to the city from the south and south-east contributed to the conversion of abandoned areas of the former Roman town to agricultural use and the establishment of new fields and gardens around the medieval town. The existing Roman north gate to the city was retained, serving the exits for Ponte de Lima and the Cávado and Homem valleys.²⁶ Thus, the eighth and ninth centuries saw the consolidation of a profound transformation of the urban layout of Braga, begun in the fourth and fifth centuries and accelerated during the

²⁶ Martins and others, 'Salvamento de Bracara Augusta'.

seventh century. A 'new' city was established which was aligned with the old Roman grid, still preserved in some of the streets around the present cathedral. The image of the city between the seventh and ninth centuries is one of change, as the orthogonal Roman grid gradually changed, its plots reconfigured by fragmentation or aggregation. This process continued throughout the later Middle Ages, resulting in an increasingly irregular urban layout centred on the cathedral, whose location determined the gradual displacement of the civic, economic, and political functions of Braga to the north-east quadrant of the city.²⁷

The Suburbs of Braga

The inheritance of Rome is manifest in the periphery of Braga as well as in the city itself, in villages, basilicas, and monasteries, particularly in their articulation with Roman roads. Those remained in use structuring the settlement of Braga's early medieval suburbs, where the Christian transformations of the urban topography can also be observed. The chapel of St Clement's Fajal, documented in the eleventh century,²⁸ stands near a Roman necropolis on the eastern road from the town and is associated with the new city gate of San Marcos. The church of San Pedro de Maximinos, documented from the tenth century,²⁹ was built on the western road near a Roman amphitheatre and necropolis at the end of St Sebastião Street, the old main Roman axis *decumanus*. Less than 1.5 kilometres to the north and east stand the churches of St Vicente, near the ancient *Via XVIII*, and St Victor, along the ancient *Via XVII*, both documented in the ninth century.³⁰ Three kilometres to the north, close to the Roman road *Via XIX* and the fertile plain of the river Cávado, two monasteries were built by two of the most notable bishops of Braga: St Martin's sixth-century monastery of Dume, and St Frutuoso's seventh-century monastery of St Saviour of Montélios, in which his mausoleum was also built. Both of these sites are described below.

Significantly, all of the churches and Roman places just mentioned are referred to in ninth- to eleventh-century ecclesiastical cartularies, which emphasize the antiquity of their territories and bounds. For example the donation of St Martin of Dume, dating to 911 but confirming a donation of 870: 'inde

²⁷ Fontes, 'Braga e o norte de Portugal', p. 317; Fontes and others, 'A cidade de Braga', p. 96.

²⁸ *Liber Fidei*, I, 163–67.

²⁹ Costa, *O Bispo D. Pedro e a Organização*, p. 102.

³⁰ Costa, *O Bispo D. Pedro e a Organização*, pp. 101 and 103.

per petras fictas qui ab antiquo pro termino fuerunt constitutas [...] et exinde in archa petrina principia ab antiquis constructa qui dividet inter Dumio et villa Lesmiri'.³¹ Clear continuity in the evolution of the countryside can be detected in this, as opposed to unambiguous transformations of urban space. The boundaries for the monastery of Dume described in the document were based on Roman plots.³² In fact, this monastic estate, of about 600 hectares, appears to match the land (*fundus*) of the old Roman villa, and its boundaries are largely preserved even to the present as the parish of Dume. The establishment of monasteries in Roman villas during late antiquity appears to have been common in Western Europe.³³

In the ninth and tenth centuries a dense system of fortifications for Braga and its territory was created against the various devastating, if episodic, Muslim, Norman, and Viking assaults. This defence was mainly based on *castra/castella*, many of which correspond to pre-Roman fortified settlements, and others to early medieval fortifications. They were all established in the hills and mountains of the territory of Braga, placed in relation to population centres and for control of important routes of communication connecting the fertile valleys of the rivers Cávado and Ave. Among the eleven documented fortifications, Falperra or Santa Marta hill, discussed below, is the best example of this process. It is a former pre-Roman *oppidum* overlooking the city of Braga, with three powerful lines of walls in which a Suevic palace was built in the fifth or sixth centuries. It is widely referenced in medieval documentation as *alpe Sancta Marta* or *subtus mons Sancta Marte*.³⁴

The churches of the Suevic and Visigothic period in Braga and its suburbs reflect the dominance of the episcopal power concentrated in the city. The monastery at Dume, which was established in a former Roman villa whose estate it preserved intact, is testament to the complex process which opposed the Suevic and Bracara-Roman elites, in this case manifested in a transfer of ownership. Revealing a growing complexity of the social structure, the tenth and eleventh centuries saw the spread of rural parish churches, probably in correlation with

³¹ Costa, *Liber Fidei*, I, 38–40; 'goes landmarks by which formerly were built to mark the boundaries [...] and goes for the old main stone ark which dividing [the monastery] Dume and villa Germil'.

³² Carvalho, 'O povoamento romano'.

³³ Díaz, 'El Reino Suevo de Hispania y su Sede en Bracara', p. 415.

³⁴ Costa, *Liber Fidei*, I, 99–101; Percival, 'Villas and Monasteries in Late Roman Gaul', pp. 15–16.

increases in population and economic activity and with the fragmentation of power to local lords and to episcopal hierarchy.

The Wider Braga Region

A critical review of the archaeological and documentary record provides a new model of the occupation and territorial organization of Braga during the early Middle Ages.³⁵ Toponymic studies, numismatics, and excavations combine to provide a rough map of the *Divisio Theodomiri* ('Suevic Parish'), a document containing a list of episcopal sees and their corresponding 'parish' churches written around 570. In this area a dense distribution of the 'parishes' (*ecclesie*) covering the vast diocesan territory can be observed.³⁶ However, this parochial organization appears to be peculiar to the area between the Douro and Minho Rivers, which corresponds to the dioceses of Braga, Porto, and part of Tui. This area is distinguished from other regions of north-west Iberia by a higher degree of territorial organization, with thirty 'parishes' in Braga, twenty-five in Porto, and seventeen in Tui. Of the latter, about half were located south of the river Minho, in present Portuguese territory. The dioceses of Braga, Porto, and Tui are also unique because, in the *Divisio Theodomiri*, only they distinguish between 'parishes' of *vici* (towns) and 'parishes' of *pagi* (rural areas), which appears to be an attempt to achieve greater coordination between cities, secondary urban nuclei, and rural settlements.

This territorial organization was maintained during the Visigothic occupation, as Gallaecia retained its administrative and economic structure. Braga kept its metropolitan ecclesiastical status and retained the dioceses of Lamego, Viseu, Coimbra, and Idanha until at least the mid-seventh century. Despite the lack of supporting documents, we can surmise that parish centres were multiplying during the Visigothic domination, whether as a result of new church foundations or by the transformation of early basilicas into baptismal churches. In rural areas, nearby settlements of greater or lesser importance (*castra-castella*, *vici*, and *villae*) emerged with new churches, basilicas, and monasteries. These ecclesiastical buildings were built on the initiative of the bishop, local communities, or a prosperous patron. In addition to the vestiges of churches in the city

³⁵ Fontes, 'O Período Suévico e Visigótico', pp. 281–84; Fontes, 'Braga e o norte de Portugal', pp. 326–30.

³⁶ Costa, *Liber Fidei*, I, 16–24.



Map 12.2.
Archaeological
mapping between
the rivers Douro and
Minho (fifth–seventh
centuries). Map by
the author.

of Braga and its region (at Dume, San Frutuoso, and Falperra) other evidences of Suevic or Visigothic churches have been detected.³⁷

There are numerous settlements, some with churches, dispersed throughout the region between the rivers Douro and Minho with archaeological evidence for continued occupation until the central Middle Ages (Map 12.2).³⁸

³⁷ In Costa (Guimarães), Santa Eulalia de Águas Santas/Rio Covo and Banho (Barcelos), Facha (Ponte de Lima), Vila Mou (Viana do Castelo), Antime (Fafe), S. João de Rei (Póvoa de Lanhoso), Santa Maria de Ferreiros (Braga), S. João do Campo (Terras de Bouro), and Santo Adrião (Vizela): Costa, *O Bispo D. Pedro e a Organização*, pp. 87–122; Fontes, 'O Período Suévico e Visigótico', p. 280.

³⁸ Cantelães, Parada de Bouro, Pandozes, and Rossas in Vieira do Minho; Lindoso in Ponte da Barca; Lanhoso, Calvos, and S. João de Rei in Póvoa de Lanhoso; Beiral do Lima, Facha, Boalhosa, Santo Ovídio, and Santa Cruz do Lima in Ponte de Lima; Santa Eulalia

Toponymic references to the owners of these sites before the early eighth-century Arab control of the Peninsula further enhance our picture of the occupation of the territory during the fifth to seventh centuries.³⁹

In the vast territory situated between the rivers Minho and Douro, large fortified settlements (termed *castra-castella* in the *Chronicle of Idácio*) are omnipresent. Some were founded during the Suevic-Visigothic period, but most are much older, even pre-Roman in date. Whether their occupation was continued or interrupted, these sites protected populations from the eventual instabilities of this period. Populations that survived the uncertain times of disarticulation of power in the eighth century and the next century were to sustain the new organizing effort played by the Asturian expansion. Finally abandoned after the tenth or eleventh centuries, these fortified settlements endured as reference points in the landscape throughout the Middle Ages and early modern period.

The Archaeology of Churches in the Braga Region: Four Case Studies

With the above explained historical and landscape contexts in mind we will now analyse four early medieval churches in this region and interpret them as reflections of the changing dynamics of socio-political power during these six centuries.

Falperra (Esporões, Braga)

Falperra is located three kilometres south of Braga atop the hill of Santa Marta, which dominates the city and the passage between the Cávado and Ave river valleys. It was excavated in the mid-twentieth century, and the ruins of two large buildings uncovered, one a probable early Christian basilica. The complex was interpreted as a monastery,⁴⁰ and the ruins of several adjacent buildings as a Suevic palace,⁴¹ consisting of three main buildings with rectangular plans and

de Águas Santas, Faria, Arefe, Lousado, Cristelo, Martin, Vila Cova, and Abade de Neiva in Barcelos; Cendufe, Eiras, Giela, Tavares, Parada, and Santa Maria do Vale in Arcos de Valdevez; Vila Mou, Areosa, Carmona, and Santa Luzia in Viana do Castelo; Lovelhe in Vila Nova de Cerveira; Alvaredo, Paderne, and Castro Laboreiro in Melgaço: Fontes, 'O Período Suévico e Visigótico', pp. 280–83.

³⁹ Almeida Fernandes, *Paróquias Suevas e Dioceses Visigóticas*; Almeida Fernandes, 'Oposição toponímica à doutrina'.

⁴⁰ Rigaud de Sousa, 'A Estação Arqueológica da Falperra'; Ribeiro da Cunha, 'Trepando aos montes'.

⁴¹ Fontes, 'O reino Suevo e o papel da Igreja', p. 134; Real, 'Portugal: cultura visigoda', pp. 26–28.

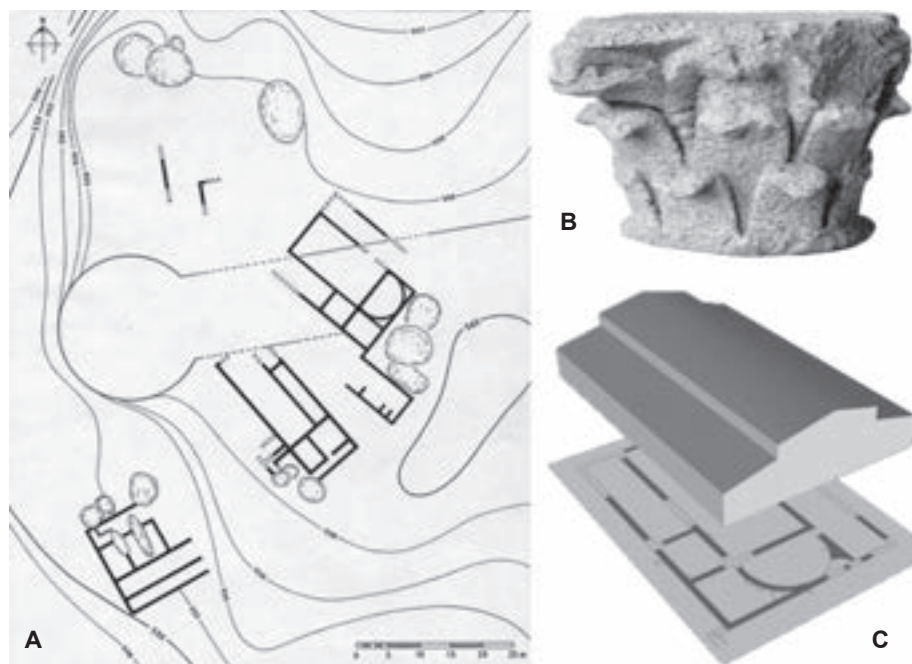


Figure 12.2. (A) General plan of the archaeological ruins of Falperra.
 Source: Rigaud de Sousa, 'A Estação Arqueológica da Falperra'; (B) Corinthian capital;
 (C) proposed restitution of the palaeo-Christian church. Figure by the author.

well-built granite walls (*opus quadratum*), arranged in terraces. The probable early Christian basilica lies on high ground on the north-east edge of the site, and measures 25×16 metres with three naves, a tripartite apse and a semicircular apse flanked by two rectangular compartments (Figure 12.2). The wider central nave and corresponding apse was surfaced with *opus signinum*.

The central building of the aristocratic residence is the largest, at 40×14 metres. It consists of a large chamber, also paved with *opus signinum*, divided by a longitudinal alignment of central pillars of granite masonry. It has several private chambers to the east and a peristilum-style court (*atrium*) and a kitchen to the south. A third building measuring 15×20 metres has multiple partitioning, and remembers an *insula*. This complex of buildings has been dated to the fifth and sixth centuries on material evidence including a granite capital of late Corinthian style and glass with a 'Crismon' (an early Christian symbol).

The excavations at Falperra are important for showing continued occupation until the ninth century. The building of a palace outside the city reveals the existence of a powerful aristocracy, able to assert its autonomy. Moreover,

the association of the palace with a church can be interpreted as the appropriation of religious architecture by a secular power, and of the close relationship between the two.

The Church of St Martin of Dume (Dume, Braga)

Dume is located about two kilometres north of Braga, on the south border of the Cávado river valley in a well-irrigated area of high agricultural potential, near a Roman road. Here, near the *urbs*, the Suevic king Charrarico built a basilica dedicated to St Martin of Tours in the mid-sixth century, which housed a monastic episcopal see.⁴² In recent decades St Martin's has been excavated, confirming that the remains of the Suevic basilica extend under the present parish church, over an area greater than 750 square metres (Figure 12.3). The remains of the west front, the nave, the central court, and the apse were uncovered, allowing the layout of the original church to be reconstructed.⁴³

The basilica was built over an existing Roman villa, which had itself been adapted into a monastery. It had substantial granite walls and a Latin cross plan oriented west–east, with three apses head and a single nave, and was approximately 33 metres long by up to 21 metres wide. It had a clear inner division: a rectangular nave separated from the apse by a triple arch supported by four pairs of columns, forming a iconostasis; a central court with a lantern tower and two semicircular apses, forming a transept with attached columns; a semicircular main chapel with attached columns on its walls, approached by three steps.

Few architectural fragments were found with the Suevic church, but all were comparable with other monuments from north-western Iberia between the fifth and eighth centuries: a fragment of marble chancel with vegetal decoration, a limestone frieze fragment with geometric decoration of diamonds, and a fragment of limestone window tracery. A granitic frieze with a rosette and herringbone motif may be chronologically later and belong to the later medieval church. Finally, a sarcophagus cover with the remains of a mosaic, dating to

⁴² Díaz, 'El reino suevo', pp. 133–34; Justino Maciel, *Antiguidade Tardia e Paleocristianismo*, pp. 71, 82.

⁴³ About the archaeological excavations in Dume, see Fontes, 'Salvamento Arqueológico de Dume: 1987'; Fontes, 'Escavações Arqueológicas na Antiga Igreja'; Fontes, 'Salvamento Arqueológico de Dume'; Fontes, 'A Igreja Sueva de Dume'; Fontes, *A Basílica Sueva de Dume*; Fontes, 'A igreja sueva de São Martinho de Dume'; Fontes and Carneiro *Salvamento arqueológico de Dume: campanha de 2004*; Fontes, Braga, and Osório, *Salvamento arqueológico de Dume. Campanha de 2010*.

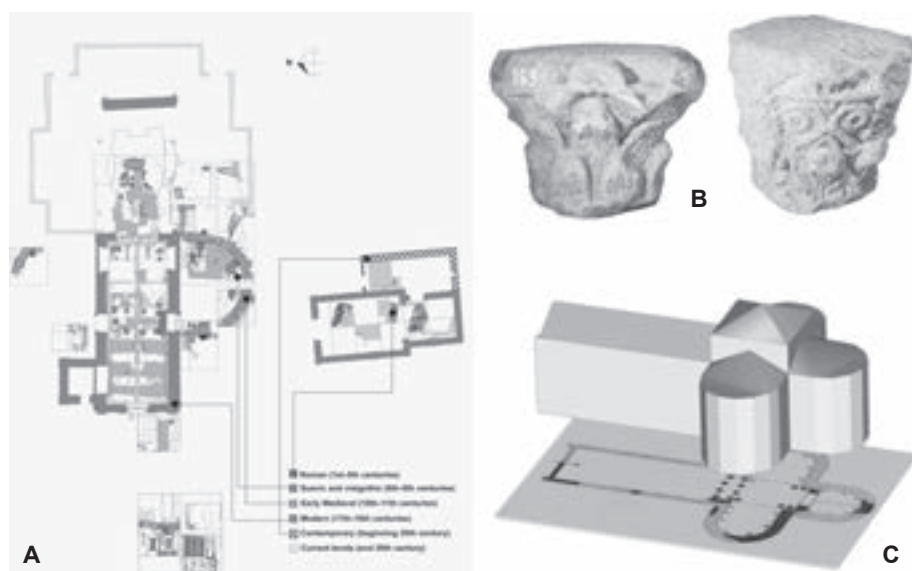


Figure 12.3. (A) General plan of the archaeological ruins of Dume; (B) capitals; (C) proposed reconstruction of the Suevic church. Figures by the author.

the end of the fifth or early sixth centuries, was found reused in a group of later medieval graves in the churchyard.

The architecture of Dume's basilica appears to have been derived from the churches of the eastern Mediterranean, which was influential throughout Western Europe from the sixth century. The early penetration of this style in the Braga region probably came from the Italian regions of Milan and Ravenna, via the Mediterranean or through the Merovingian Frankish Kingdom. From the point of view of the organization of the liturgical space the three areas reflect the complexity of the liturgical service in the Suevic period, which reserved the sanctuary for the clergy and the nave for the faithful, which is in keeping with eastern Mediterranean, probably Greek Christian, practice.

The exceptional size of the church, even in an Iberian context, can be explained as a royal building initiative, with which the monarch must have intended to assert the power of the Suevic dynasty and to witness, through a great architectural work, the effective conversion of the king and his people to Christianity. St Martin of Dume would consolidate this conversion, laying the foundations of the administrative and territorial organization of Braga's church.

Occupation at the site seems to have continued until the ninth century, which coincides with a documented abandonment of the monastery in 866 by

its abbot Sabarico, who took refuge in Mondonhedo on the North Galician coast. In 911 King Ordonho II of Galicia re-established the territory of Dume and confirmed the previous donation to the Bishop of Mondonhedo, made in 877 by Alfonso III of Asturias.⁴⁴ The early basilica was rebuilt as part of this tenth-century interest in Dume by the monarchy, and a larger new church raised (*a fundamentis*). Its new walls had substantial granitic foundations and were constructed against the outer face of the walls of the earlier basilica. The construction of these walls was quite different: regular small granite blocks only 0.8 metres thick. The existing plan of a triple apse and a single nave was retained, albeit on a larger scale: some 35 metres long by 11.5 metres wide, with a transept 23 metres across.

The internal organization of the church changed significantly following this rebuilding. The remains of the original church were completely covered by a thick mortar pavement of *opus signinum* type, eliminating all previous arches. The remains of two different altars were identified in the eastern apse: one with a ciborium or baldachin, and another altar box-shaped measuring 1.2 metres long by 0.8 metres wide. Two new external doors were inserted in the lateral apses. Finally, the former triple arch at the passage from the transept to the nave was removed, blurring the separation from the transept. Outside the church there is some evidence for a new side chapel (perhaps housing the alleged tomb of St Martin) placed against the angle formed by the east and south apses. It shows the remnants of a crushed brick pavement, a kind of *opus signinum*, with two bases of columns reversed, and is dateable to the tenth or eleventh centuries.

Several important burials, also dated to the tenth and eleventh centuries, were uncovered at the front of the church, with well-built rectangular coffins oriented east–west. Some were of brick, some masonry, and some were megalithic slabs of granite. A mosaic cover datable to the fifth or sixth centuries was reused as a common marker for three graves.

For this period and this region, the Latin cross model constitutes an exception in a context dominated by churches with rectangular nave and apse. It is understood here to be a local solution inherited from earlier Suevic practice and therefore represents continuity rather than innovation. The systematic reuse of earlier building materials in the new church can therefore be attributed to their scarcity rather than the desire to evoke the past, since the church is unusual in the region in not copying Roman models.

⁴⁴ Costa, *Liber Fidei*, pp. 38–40.

The Mausoleum of St Frutuoso de Montélios (Real, Braga)

The mausoleum of St Frutuoso is located beside St Saviour's monastery near Dume, crowning the small hill of Montélios, and was erected around 660 by Bishop Frutuoso to house his tomb.⁴⁵ It was rebuilt in the tenth century in the context of the Asturian and Leonese organization of the territory and the promotion of the cult of St Frutuoso. Integrated in later expansions of the monastery, the little chapel was concealed and forgotten until 1897 before being controversially restored in the 1930s.

The mausoleum is considered the most important and complex example of pre-Romanesque architecture in Portugal, being referenced by researchers as a unique peninsular in shape, dimensions, and decorative grammar. It was built of regular granite masonry to a Greek cross plan, with each axis measuring 13 metres. The west arm is rectangular in plan with a barrel vault, whilst the other three housed apses with horseshoe arches and composite covering. In the centre rises a lantern tower topped by a hemispherical brick dome. Ongoing studies suggest three main phases for the mausoleum.⁴⁶ The first corresponds to scarce remnants of original building: walls in the west apse and the central pillars and lower half of the walls of the lantern tower. The second corresponds to its early medieval rebuilding and consists of the greater part of its external fabric, the upper half of its lantern tower and corbelled dome, much of its limestone architectural decoration, and parts of its north, east, and south apses. The third phase corresponds to the mausoleum's twentieth-century reconstruction (Figure 12.4).

Although further studies are being conducted and the data are still problematic, we propose the following interpretation: The remains of the first phase correspond to the mausoleum as constructed by St Frutuoso about the year 660. It appears to have been modelled on the mausoleum of Galla Placidia in Ravenna, due to its Greek cross plan, barrel-vaulted square apses, and lantern tower with hemispherical domed ceiling. The second phase corresponds to its tenth-century rebuilding, which transformed the simple existing mausoleum into a complex oratory with an original architectural scheme combining classical, Asturian, and Mozarabic influences. The restored monument corresponds to this early medieval reconstruction.

⁴⁵ Fontes, *San Frutuoso de Montélios*.

⁴⁶ Fontes, 'O Norte de Portugal entre os séculos VIII e X', pp. 459–62.

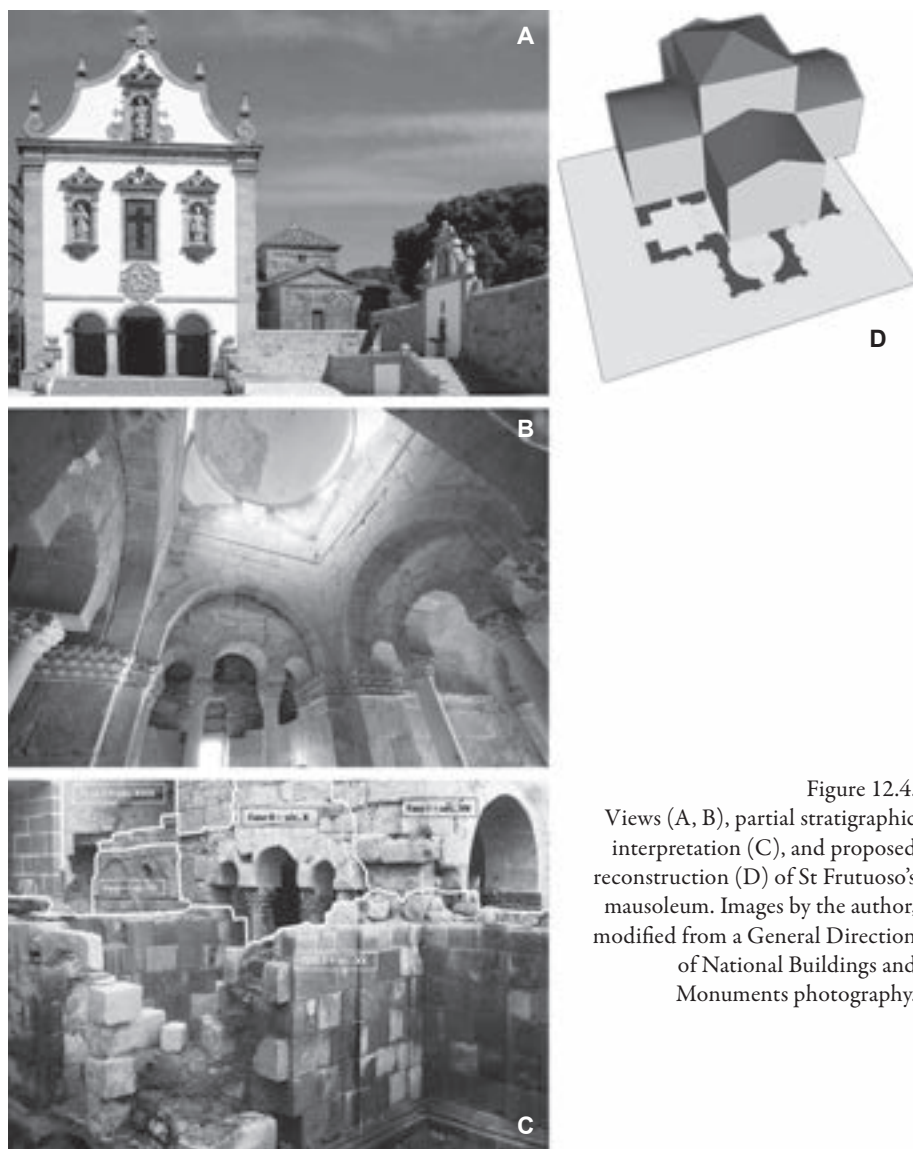


Figure 12.4.
Views (A, B), partial stratigraphic
interpretation (C), and proposed
reconstruction (D) of St Frutuoso's
mausoleum. Images by the author,
modified from a General Direction
of National Buildings and
Monuments photography.

The mausoleum manifests the social power of its seventh-century builder, Bishop Frutuoso, who wanted to assert the power and status of the see of Braga. The adaptation of his mausoleum as an oratory in the tenth century, and the rise of his cult as a saint, can be interpreted as the Asturian court's desire to assert its Visigothic heritage, since Frutuoso had been a member of the Visigothic aristocracy.

The Old Church of St Torcato (São Torcato, Guimarães)

The so-called 'old church' of St Torcato, situated on a small hill overlooking its village namesake, was the church of the former monastery of St Torcato. Its origin goes back to the mid-tenth century, the time of King Ramiro II, who is recorded as endowing the monastery in the inventory of the property of the monastery of Guimarães in 1059.⁴⁷ The present church expresses the historical vicissitudes of its past through its different spaces and varied architectural styles: its nineteenth-century nave, Romanesque chancel, attached gothic chapel (called 'the chapel of the Saint'), and the remains of its late medieval cloister. Restoration works in 1986 led to the discovery of an important set of eight reliquary boxes which corroborate this architectural evolution: one of tenth-century date, five of the eleventh century, one of the twelfth century, and the last of the thirteenth century, which remained in use until the sixteenth century.⁴⁸

Partial excavation of the church and churchyard in 1987 uncovered part of the monastery's necropolis, in use throughout the Middle Ages, and the remains of the apse of the original church of St Torcato, which was rectangular in plan and constructed from roughly dressed megalithic granite with shallow gravel foundations. The coarse nature of the masonry and the nature of its mortar are indicative of the building's foundations, whereas its walls would have been of fine quality (Figures 12.5a and 12.5b). The remains of several graves were also identified against the foundations of the early church. At least one was formed from granite slabs planted vertically, with a brick marking the place of the head, covered by tiles.

Architectural fragments from the tenth-century church were incorporated into its Romanesque rebuild: two arched windows (*ajimezes*) and three dozen fragments of elaborate friezes, all of which indicate that the tenth-century church possessed abundant decoration.⁴⁹ Although these fragments are all of Coimbra limestone and share common decorative motifs, their execution reveals differences. The design of the friezes is geometrically rigorous, and the bar and bevel show a perfect design, with absolute regularity. The design of the *ajimezes* is geometrically irregular and the carving imperfect, but also bevelled. This suggests that two different workshops were involved in the church's construction, the carved friezes from the centre of Portugal and the *ajimezes* carved by a less experienced craftsman working locally on the construction of

⁴⁷ Costa, *O Bispo D. Pedro e a Organização*, pp. 149–50.

⁴⁸ Barroca and Real, 'As caixas-relicário de São Torcato'.

⁴⁹ Real, 'A escultura decorativa', p. 170.



Figure 12.5a General plan of the archaeological ruins of St Torcato. Figure by the author.

the church. The fact that there is a frieze in which an *ajimez* was attempted reinforces this interpretation.⁵⁰

The church of St Torcato can be interpreted as a manifestation of the power of the local elites of the Kingdom of Asturias, many of whom founded status-affording churches and monasteries. Significantly, both St Torcato and St

⁵⁰ Real, 'A escultura decorativa', p. 164.

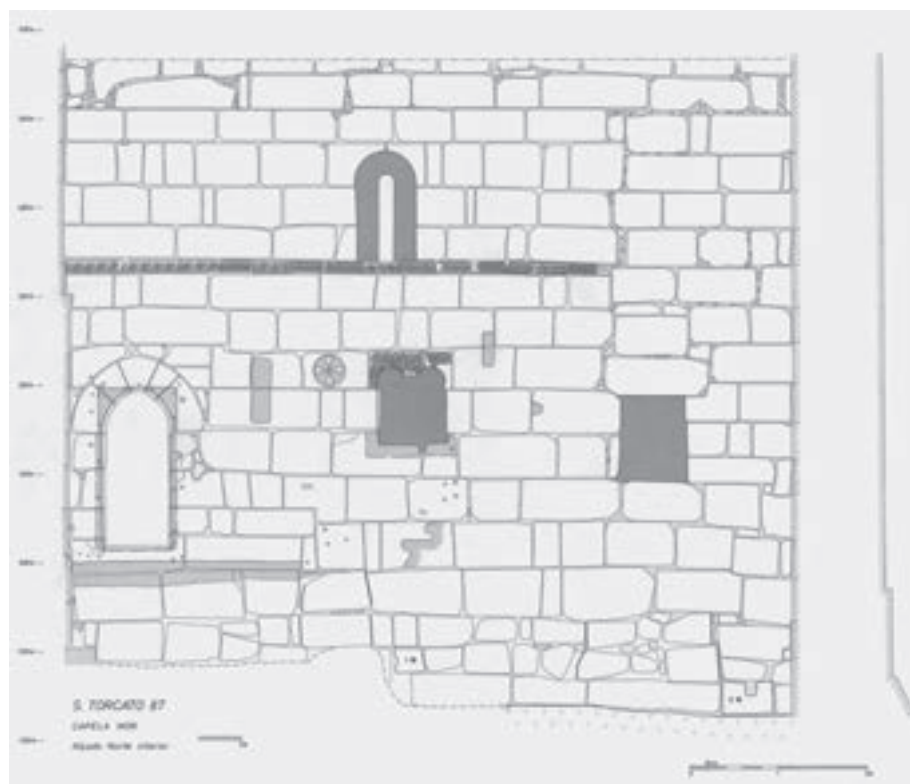


Figure 12.5b. Inside elevation of the northern wall of the chancel. Figure by the author.

Frutuoso are two of the major saints of Visigothic hagiography, so the names recall the legitimization of the Visigothic Kingdom.⁵¹

The Churches in Contemporary Society

The remains of churches of the Suevic-Visigothic period display surprisingly up-to-date architecture, with influences coming from the eastern Mediterranean, the Italian peninsula, southern Iberia, and North Africa (Figure 12.6). The elements of architectural decoration, particularly the capitals, show the persistence of Roman stylistic patterns, with developments that reflect strong local traditions with pre-Roman roots. This is an expression of the ideological and aesthetic transition from late antiquity to the Middle Ages in western Iberia,

⁵¹ On this topic, see also José Carlos Sánchez-Pardo's essay in this volume.

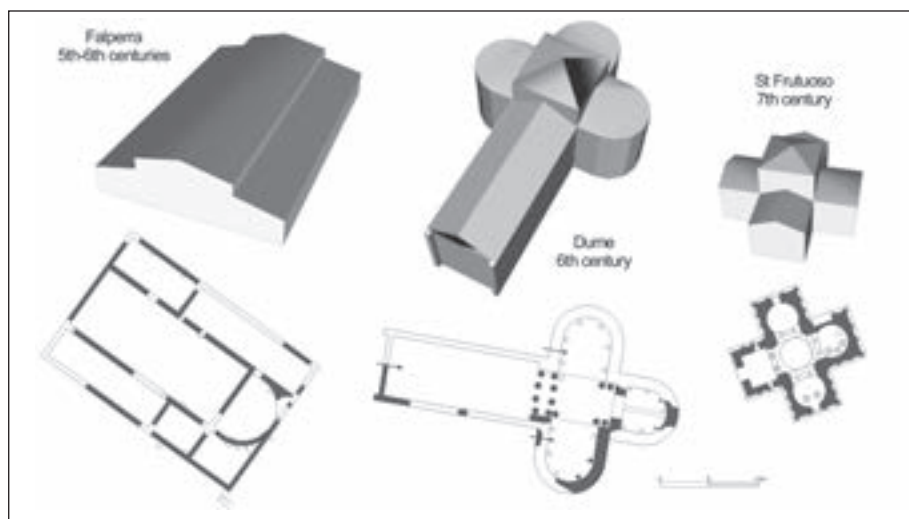


Figure 12.6. Models of Suevic-Visigothic Christian Architecture in the region of Braga.
Figures by the author.

indicating the agency of the bishops in using churches to promote the convergence of Hispano-Roman and barbarian societies. The bishops emerged during the fifth century as prominent and influential figures in the exercise of political power, acting as ideological mentors for the newly established Suevic and Visigothic Kingdoms. Through the proven link between the Church and monarchy, these churches represent the use of architecture to manifest power, and to promote the ideological unity of the kingdoms.

Few archaeological remains from the ninth and tenth centuries have survived, and most that do are related to religious buildings. In this sense, it can be said that the Church continued to be the main patron of opulent buildings, repeating the pattern of the Suevic-Visigothic period. This religious architecture also has deep political implications regarding the integration of northern Portugal in the Asturian Kingdom. The 'Mozarabic' rebuilding of St Frutuoso's mausoleum in Braga can be assigned to the initial period of political reorganization following the region's integration in the Asturian Kingdom in the ninth and tenth centuries, which reinforced the cult of this saint. The construction of St Torcato's in Guimarães also reinforced Asturian influence on this newly conquered territory.⁵²

⁵² Real, 'A escultura decorativa em Portugal', p. 158; Ferreira de Almeida, *História da Arte em Portugal*, pp. 22–28.



Figure 12.7. Elements of architectural decoration of the ninth–eleventh centuries: (A) capital of Ferreiros (Amares); (B) capital of Santa Cruz de Lima (Ponte de Lima); (C) *ajimez* of Torre (Amares); (D) lattice of Pedralva (Braga). Photographs by the author.

Generally, an architectural revival is recognized in this period, with diverse intertwined influences expressed in different local trends (Figure 12.7). Despite problems of dating, due mainly to a lack of secure archaeological contexts, a distinct ‘Galician-Portuguese’ ecclesiastical architecture existed from the ninth to the twelfth centuries. It emerged around major regional population centres and had several foci: Braga itself, southern urban centres such as Merida, Malaga, Lisbon, and Coimbra, and the Asturian capital of Oviedo. From the tenth century, architectural decorative elements in north-west Iberia, especially capitals and friezes, reflect a concern with the recovery of classical architecture and

local developments that prefigure the later Romanesque style, as seen in Dume and St Frutuoso. After the late eleventh century, this background found full expression in the characteristic Romanesque architecture of the Braga region, whose acceptance and widespread diffusion is certainly associated with the emergence of the Kingdom of Portugal, led by elites of French origin, which replaced existing local aristocratic structures.

Conclusions

This study has sought to bring together documentary and archaeological evidence to explore the social and territorial organization of the Braga region from the fifth to the eleventh centuries and how this is expressed in the church architecture of the period. As in the rest of north-west Iberia, the early medieval landscape of the Braga region reveals changes and continuities in both urban and rural spaces.⁵³ The Roman heritage was conserved in the urban topography and in much of the rural territorial organization, revealing a different rhythm of transformation. Whilst the city experimented with more formal changes, the countryside preserved its ancient land structure largely unchanged until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The early medieval church architecture of the Braga region was affected by external influences that fused with local tradition. There is little evidence for a conservative architectural tradition linked with a durable socio-political system in early medieval northern Portugal. Different styles of religious architecture correspond to various ephemeral powers, and the profusion of different churches in the region indicates that social power was fragmented and localized at this time. In this sense, the heterogeneous architecture of both new and rebuilt churches is a better reflection of the evolution and experiences of this society than a standardized model of regional architecture. The diversity of early medieval Christian architecture in the Braga region is understandable only within a dynamic framework of competing social interests, in which it is possible to glimpse local elites using churches to negotiate their spheres of influence, in the confines of social and familial ties to the bishop.

⁵³ A similar process is visible in southern Galicia: Sánchez-Pardo, 'Continuidad y cambio del poblamiento tardorromano y altomedieval en Galicia', pp. 716–17.

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LOCAL CHURCHES, SETTLEMENTS, AND SOCIAL POWER IN LATE ANTIQUE AND EARLY MEDIEVAL GAUL: NEW AVENUES IN THE LIGHT OF RECENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN SOUTH-EAST FRANCE

Christine Delaplace*

In honour of Gabriel Fournier

Introduction

The story of the Christianization of Gaul between the fourth and ninth centuries is a contested one. The south-east, the region of the old Roman provinces of *Narbonensis* I and II and the southern *Viennensis*, nowadays Provence and Languedoc-Roussillon, showed early evidence of Christianization, both in *civitates* and in rural areas, witnessed by many churches, baptisteries, *memoriae*, and funeral *basilicae* with relics of saints. In the south-west and the centre, the first churches attested by archaeology date only from the sixth and seventh centuries. In the north of France (a large part of Gaul) there are no Christian

* I wish to express my gratitude to the companionable and intellectually stimulating group of archaeological colleagues whose scholarly interactions, with CNRS support of programmed excavation, have made today's overview possible. Laurent Schneider's co-direction of doctoral theses and the meetings of the Montpellier Medieval Archaeology Seminars have engendered a real dialogue among specialists from different corners of France. I also would like to thank N. Clément, M. G. Colin, G. Duperron, D. Martinez, B. Ode, R. Pellé, and L. Schneider for sending me the original plans and photos of their excavations before publication, I. Cartron for the communication of an in-press chronicle in the *Revue Aquitania*, and L. Bourgeois for transmission of information. I am also grateful to Christine Merllie-Young and Bailey Young for their help with my English text and to Michael Shapland and José Carlos Sánchez-Pardo for their editorial work.

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monuments before the eighth or ninth centuries.¹ This, of course, is the picture given to us by archaeology, rather than the reality of Christianization. We can assume that the absence of sources, written or archaeological, does not generally reflect a radio-concentric development of the ecclesiastical infrastructure in the first centuries of the early Middle Ages.²

Traditional approaches to churches focus on them as monuments but do not consider their landscape contexts. The presence of a church indicates a nearby settlement; a church also manifests and expresses the power of its builder over its locality. Following the conceptual framework for the present volume, this paper aims to unveil political dynamics and strategies of social power by focusing on the dialectic between settlement evolution and rural churches, with particular emphasis given to churches on hilltop sites.

This paper has two parts. The first part will introduce the current debate on churches and Christianization in early medieval archaeology and history in France and will address the methodological problem of which is the best scale for the study of this topic. The second part concentrates on the south-east zone, where many recent excavations suggest a complete reassessment of the relationships between Christianization and settlement. I will present three cases of new discoveries of very early baptismal churches in rural hilltop sites in the south-east of France. I wish to demonstrate that late antique hilltop villages in this area must have been an important form of expression of elite power at the turning point of the Roman world. Because of this, they were often associated with churches.

Late Antique and Early Medieval Ecclesiastical Organization in Medieval Archaeology and History in France Today: A Brief Critical Review

Elizabeth Zadora-Rio has written two of the more recent and interesting studies in English devoted to early medieval ecclesiastical organization in France. The first concerns the north of France, and comparisons with England, and argues that new developments in burial archaeology and recent reassessments of evidence compel a reconsideration of the transition from unassociated burial

¹ On the early medieval ecclesiastical organization of northern France, see Anne Nissen's contribution to this volume.

² Delaplace, 'Géographie de l'érémisme en Gaule'; Delaplace, 'La mise en place de l'infrastructure ecclésiastique'; Delaplace, 'L'articulation entre les sources archéologiques et les sources écrites'.



Map 13.1.
Map of the main sites
of northern, central,
and south-western
France mentioned in
the text. Map by José
Carlos Sánchez-Pardo
using Demis WMS
World Map.

grounds to churchyards.³ A great variety of burial locations were in use during the early Middle Ages, and this does not constitute evidence for evaluating the level of Christianization among the rural population. Similarly, Luc Bourgeois recently insisted that in many recent surveys burials were discovered near settlements until the late Middle Ages.⁴ Both these studies are an invitation to reconsider both classic theories about the birth of churchyards and the beginnings of parish organization.⁵

A number of studies devoted to the subject of ecclesiastical organization have been published in the last decade. The archaeological evidence highlights the complexity of parochialization, but on this issue the historic view is still conditioned by written sources,⁶ which often preserve only the intellectual

³ Zadora-Rio, 'The Making of Churchyards and Parish'.

⁴ Bourgeois, 'Vingt ans de recherches'.

⁵ Imbart de la Tour, *Les Origines religieuses de la France*; Chaume, 'Le mode de constitution'; Fossier, 'La naissance du village'.

⁶ Lauwers, 'Paroisse, paroissiens'; Lauwers, '*Territorium non facere*'.

world-views of ecclesiastics and the upper classes.⁷ We must question these narratives by looking beyond these sources, which explicitly record the process of parochialization and the birth of the tithe only from the ninth century. These were the foundation of the economic and social domination of the Church and were central to ecclesiastical organization and episcopal concerns. Discussion between historians and archaeologists across late antiquity and the Middle Ages must continue to prevent the disconnect between ‘the village of the historians and the village of the archaeologists,’⁸ and to better approach medieval society *dans la longue durée*.

In her second article in English, Zadora-Rio provides a clear overview of the sites of Rigny (Rigny-Ussé, Indre-et-Loire), Saleux ‘Les Coutures’ (Somme), and Serris (Ile-de-France),⁹ which constitute the major recent excavations and studies for this part of the north of France for the sixth to seventh centuries (Map 13.1).¹⁰ She identifies two major trends in this area: the building of many small timber villages during the sixth and seventh centuries, and a major shift in the later seventh century towards larger villages and the construction of elite buildings. This is visible in the three above-mentioned sites, as well as at Tournedos-sur-Seine (Normandy) and Biéville-Beuville (Calvados) (Map 13.1). In Tournedos, a wooden church was built during the eighth century and rebuilt in stone a century later.¹¹ In Saleux, a wooden building erected during the eighth century succeeded a small monument.¹² There is a growing body of evidence for timber architecture during this period, which calls for a major programme on wooden churches, as has been done in Switzerland.¹³ However, the issue of chronology is a problem in this part of France, because remains in rural context tend to be poorly preserved. In the absence of liturgical evidence, identifying and investigating early churches presents real challenges.

In his synthesis for the centre-west of France, Bourgeois is a little more optimistic.¹⁴ Although his conclusion might seem outdated, his suggestion that archaeological data should be translated into historical narratives remains valid.

⁷ Iogna-Prat, ‘Constructions chrétiennes d’un espace politique’.

⁸ Zadora-Rio, ‘Le village des historiens’.

⁹ Zadora-Rio, ‘Early Medieval Villages’.

¹⁰ Gentili and Valais, ‘Composantes aristocratiques et organisation’.

¹¹ Zadora-Rio, ‘Early Medieval Villages’, p. 91; Carré, ‘Le site de Portejoie’.

¹² Zadora-Rio, ‘Early Medieval Villages’, p. 91; Cattedu, ‘Le site haut-médiéval de Saleux’.

¹³ Cattedu and others, ‘Fouilles d’églises rurales du Haut Moyen Âge’.

¹⁴ Bourgeois, ‘Vingt ans de recherches’.

Is this realistic considering both the lack of large-scale research programmes which consider evolution on a regional scale, and the present density of site monographs? Fortunately, Bourgeois does provide here the kind of regional synthesis that we need.¹⁵

In Aquitaine, the research excavation at 'La Chapelle' (Jau-Jignac-et-Loirac, Gironde) between 2001 and 2009 uncovered a church erected by a local elite family.¹⁶ Research excavations at Moutier-Rozeille (Creuse) suggest that a late Roman mausoleum was transformed into a church.¹⁷ Reviewing recent work in a forthcoming article, Isabelle Cartron discusses the limits of developer-led, preventative archaeology compared to research-led excavations for our understanding of early medieval settlements.¹⁸ The advantages of research over preventative excavation are well known; in the next section, we shall discuss some research programmes which all the actors of French archaeology regard favourably.

Regarding south-west France, Marie-Genevieve Colin has recently undertaken one of the first recent studies to treat an entire ecclesiastical province, that of Novempopulania.¹⁹ This is a very ambitious project in both space and chronology (fourth to tenth centuries) which lists all known Christian liturgical artefacts, although almost half of its 376 compiled sites are uncertain due to problems with object provenance. The author also undertook little new fieldwork, which is a problem with this type of research, focused on old documentation with a view to publishing an exhaustive corpus. Only four sites have been the subject of recent investigations and surveys,²⁰ with no new excavations planned. For two of these sites, Arnesp (Haute-Garonne) and Dému (Gers), it is now thought that the churches were later than previously thought:

¹⁵ Collective programmes such as 'Fortifications et résidences des élites du Haut Moyen Âge entre Loire et Garonne' (Bourgeois, 'Fortifications et residences des élites') bode well for the future of medieval archaeology in Central France.

¹⁶ Cartron and Castex, 'Identité et mémoire'.

¹⁷ Roger, 'Le pouvoir attractif'.

¹⁸ I would like to thank I. Cartron for sending me this paper before publication. Two exceptions are sites at Chassenon (Charente) and Pouthoumé (Vienne), in Poitou-Charentes (Cornec and Farago-Szekeres, 'L'habitat et les cimetières du Haut Moyen Âge').

¹⁹ Colin, *Christianisation et peuplement*. Novempopulania was a Roman administrative province created at the beginning of the fourth century, corresponding to today's départements of Landes, Pyrénées-Atlantiques, part of Gironde, and Lot-et-Garonne (the Aquitaine region); Gers, Haute-Garonne, Haute-Pyrénées, part of Ariège, and part of Tarn-et-Garonne (Midi-Pyrénées region).

²⁰ Arnesp, Valentine (Haute-Garonne), Géou, Labastide d'Armagnac (Landes), Saint-Girons, Maubourguet (Hautes-Pyrénées), and Dému (Gers).

from the eighth century onwards, and Romanesque. Colin also suggests that Visigothic architecture influenced the church of Arnesp due to its cruciform plan with occidental annexes and details in its carved decor. At Saint-Girons, Maubourguet (Hautes-Pyrénées), the results were more disappointing. Only at la Chapelle Notre-Dame, Géou, Labastide d'Armagnac (Landes), where a Roman villa was superseded by a church, has research been more successful. The first Christian monument, perhaps an *oratorium*, was originally dated vaguely between the fourth and eleventh centuries; it was erected on top of the villa. New research has indicated a date in the earlier part of this range, albeit with reference to stylistic comparisons with similar monuments, not stratigraphic evidence. A larger church was built to the south of this small structure.

In her conclusion, Colin asserts that the Christianization of south-western Gaul took place a little later than in the south-east. This would explain the absence of rural baptisteries (with the possible exception of Seviac (Gers)). Colin emphasizes continuities with Roman structures, both in agricultural and settlement contexts, and their influence on Christianization. This is a debatable assertion, because in this region (as in south-eastern Gaul) any excavations and surveys undertaken in modern villages and hilltop sites are likely to reveal earlier settlement patterns. In fact, the real problem comes from the absence of archaeological research programmes likely to reveal other systems of settlement in this part of southern France.

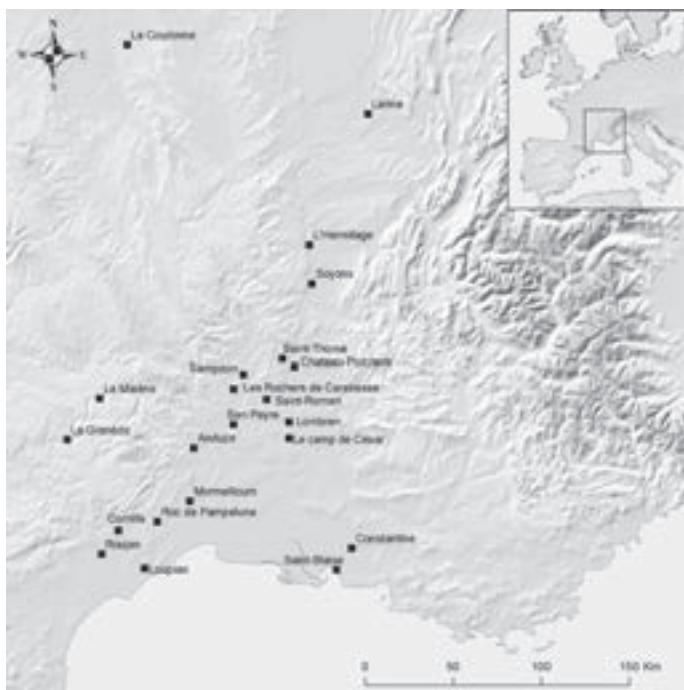
In conclusion of this first section, it can be noted that research in numerous regions of France has been disappointing, even when conducted on the scale of a Roman province. In the second part of this chapter, we shall see that a targeted research programme can be more productive, one which emphasizes the importance of connecting any study of a church with its settlement context and its own evolution. The chosen study area is southern Gaul.

Settlement and Local Churches in South-East Gaul

In south-east Gaul, a number of sites have revolutionized our understanding of late antique and early medieval settlement patterns, notably Ardèche, Jura, Languedoc-Roussillon, Lozère, Provence, and the Rhône valley (Map 13.2). They include both isolated rural churches and churches on hilltop sites; together, they challenge traditional models of the disappearance of the villa and demographic and economic decline after the end of the Roman Empire. The study of the relationships between these important sites and their churches opens up new fields of historical interpretation.

In the south-east of France the study of local churches has moved beyond traditional art-historical approaches, with churches now being related to their

Map 13.2.
Map of the main
sites of south-east
France mentioned
in the text. Map by
José Carlos Sánchez-
Pardo using Demis
WMS World Map.



settlement contexts. However, problems arise with emergency excavations of monuments, on limited urban sites. During renovation work of the church of Saint-Privat (Gailhan, Gard) in 2004, an early fifth-century apsidal wall was discovered, but the excavator was unable to go any further.²¹ Few such early churches have been discovered in France, and most of these are in the south.²² It would be helpful to make such discoveries better known and to promote a widespread programme to monitor construction work in churches.²³

The issue of early Christian churches is part of the larger question of the relationship between a church and its founder, the relationship between church and settlement, and socio-political interpretations of churches. Here there is no question of a simple one-to-one correlation. Regional archaeological administrations have tended to neglect this subject; conversely, it has inspired new research and discoveries in the south-east. Nothing drives this point home

²¹ Pellé, *L'église Saint Privat à Gailhan*.

²² Delaplace, *Aux origines de la paroisse*.

²³ As was undertaken in the 1980s in Aquitaine: Régaldo-Saint Blancard, *Archéologie des églises*; Delaplace, 'Les premiers temps chrétiens', p. 230.

more than the excavations of ancient baptismal churches and the hilltop sites we present here.

The Earliest Baptismal Churches

Each of the three examples analysed in detail below will illustrate a different aspect of the relations between church founders and the development of a settlement, and therefore different socio-political dynamics in southern Gaul. We will start with a large early Christian church built in the fifth century on the site of an impressive villa. Then we will follow the story of a peri-urban baptismal church, built on the site of pagan temples, which played an important role in the political and religious conflict of its region due to its possession of prestigious relics. Finally, we will focus on a church built on a hilltop site which appears — given its location — to manifest the domination of the Church and/or its builders across the local landscape.

Loupian: A Church Created in a Rich Rural Villa

The baptismal church of Sainte-Cécile, in Loupian (Hérault), near Agde, was constructed at the beginning of the fifth century.²⁴ It consisted of a large church (27 × 9.5 m) with a baptistery building (5 × 5 m), and lies 500 metres from an important villa named Les Près-Bas, established in the mid-first century BC. It was extended and embellished with an extraordinary *triclinium* and became the centre of an important rural estate during the fifth century (Figure 13.1A).²⁵

The first church on the site remained in use until at least the tenth century. In the course of the sixth century the villa Les Près-Bas was reused and then abandoned. At the same time a new settlement (La Rouge-La Condamine) developed near the church. Later, prior to AD 1010, the construction of a *castrum* led to the reorganization of this site, with a different settlement focus. It is important to note that Sainte-Cécile was not a small rural church, but a significant building some 256 metres square (Figure 13.1 (B)). It is comparable to contemporary urban churches, whose episcopal architecture it adopts, thus reflecting the increasingly important role of private initiative in church creation. Yet we do not know whether or not the founder was a bishop constructing a church on his estate. In all likelihood, the possessor of the villa was the private founder of Sainte-Cécile.

²⁴ Pellecuer, *La villa des Près-Bas*; Pellecuer and Schneider, 'Premières églises et espace rural'.

²⁵ Pellecuer and Schneider, 'Premières églises et espace rural'.

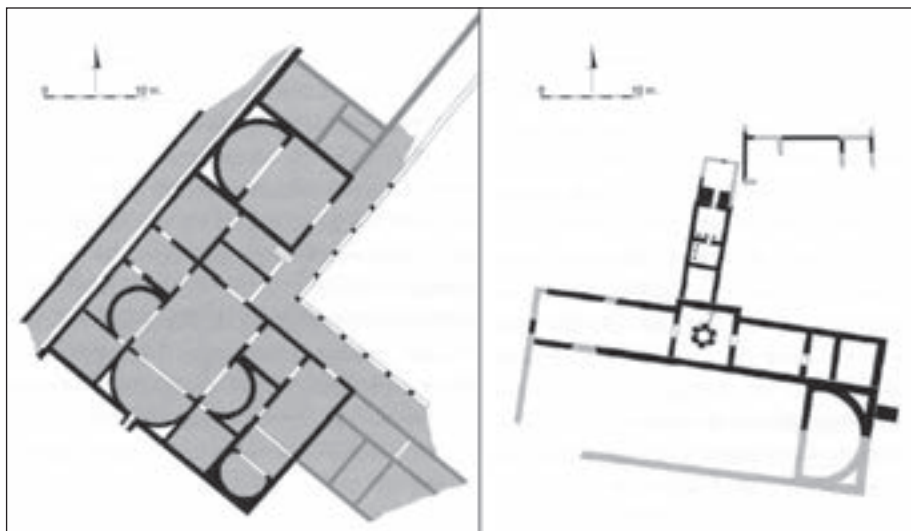


Figure 13.1. Loupian (Hérault): (A) The residential part of Les Près-Bas villa; (B) the church of Sainte-Cécile and its annexes. Source: Pellecuer and Schneider, 'Premières églises et espace rural', p. 101.

Roujan: A Semi-Urban Foundation

The second site, Roujan-Medilium, illustrates another settlement context. Here the church and the medieval settlement were built within an ancient urban district where pagan temples had been in use during the High Roman Empire. This site is particularly interesting because it shows us a previously unknown urban area of Gallo-Roman Beziers; it represents an extraordinary document of the end of antiquity, a period of dynamism and reorganization, not collapse. This period witnessed the growth of new local powers, such as in Loupian/Agde, which was both an episcopal seat and a political and administrative centre with a Gothic count present. This growth of local power in new places may be visible at Roujan, where the erection of a baptistery can be read as the symbol of the rivalry between the bishoprics of Beziers and Lodève. During the first centuries of Christianization, bishops manifested their power in their new dioceses with monuments such as baptisteries and hermitages, representing an organized decentralization that favoured the rural communities.²⁶ We will discuss this same phenomenon below with reference to hilltop churches.

²⁶ Delaplace, 'Géographie de l'érémisme en Gaule'; Delaplace, 'La mise en place de l'infrastructure ecclésiastique'; Delaplace, *Aux origines de la paroisse rurale*.

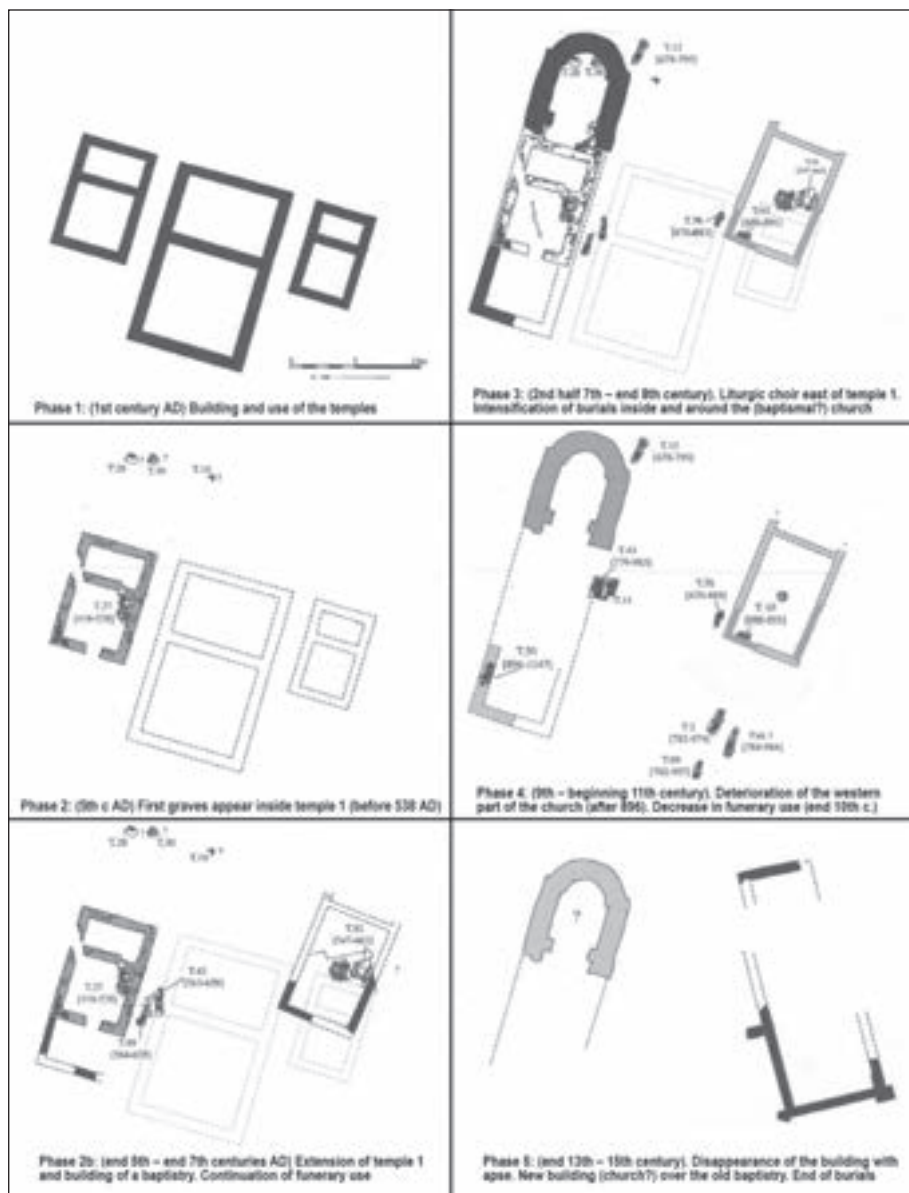


Figure 13.2. Evolution of the monumental core of the quartier of Saint-Jean, Roujan.
Source: Colin, Schneider, and Laurent, 'Roujan-Medilium (z) de l'Antiquité au Moyen Âge', p. 161.

The excavations at Roujan have been the subject of a very complete and exciting publication.²⁷ During the 1980s an emergency excavation carried out in the Saint-Jean district of Roujan uncovered a group of three Graeco-Roman temples. This first-century AD monumental district underwent some important alterations from the fifth century AD. The northern sanctuary was transformed into a funerary building, a memorial soon elaborated with an apse. A baptismal building was built on the site of the southern sanctuary. Up until the beginning of the eleventh century numerous burials took place there, about fifty near each building, the earliest in the fifth or beginning of the sixth century, the latest in the tenth century, when the funerary building went out of use. It is thought that the baptistery church was dedicated to Saint-Jean, and the first funerary monument to Saint-Majan (Figure 13.2).

If we wanted to investigate how the written sources reflect this new situation and how the memory of it changed over time, it is important to note that no church dedicated to St John was mentioned in local sources during the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries. The new church, which became the parish church of Saint-Laurent, was located about 400 metres from the excavations. We see there the result of the establishment of the *castrum* and the development of new settlements that disrupted the old local ecclesiastical organization.

The possession of the relics of St Majan was the subject of a heated debate involving the inhabitants of Roujan and several monasteries in the locality (Villemagne, Saint-Thibéry, and Aniane). Who was this saint and why was he at the centre of this quarrel? This question allows us a glimpse, through an anthropological lens, of the complexity of the religious display that was integral to the constitution of memory and the origins of local Christianity. For Roujan, five kinds of evidence guide this hypothesis:

1. The baptistery, which offers an institutional ecclesiastical context.
2. The new medieval name of the villa nearest to Roujan-Medilium: Plevejos/Plevigium with a significant prefix: *plebs*.
3. A popular local cult of St Majan.

²⁷ Colin, Schneider, and Vidal, 'Roujan-Medilium (?) de l'Antiquité au Moyen Âge'. In this same publication (pp. 173–81), Laurent Schneider explores correlations between churches and rural settlement in the north piedmont of the Beziers region. This exciting topographic approach to the Christianization of rural Gaul is in contrast to the traditional emphasis on making lists, whether of simple liturgical objects, of the oldest churches known in written sources, or — even worse — of dedication dates.

4. The ancient sphere of influence of the Church of Béziers in the locality of Roujan.
5. The growing influence of Aniane in the Roujan district, notably with the gift of the Plevigos villa to Saint-Majan church around 1000.

This case is an example of how an archaeological excavation combined with a highly developed analysis of textual sources can reveal the construction of a collective memory of the origins of local Christianity. The transmission of later medieval memories of St Majan can be traced back through time, allowing us to analyse the conversion of this pagan temple into a funerary monument dedicated to St Majan. Moreover, there is good evidence that the ancient baptismal church of Roujan was dedicated to St John. Later, this collective memory shifted in favour of St Majan alone, with no mention of a medieval church of St John in local written sources.

Le Roc de Pampelune: A New Model of Hilltop Church

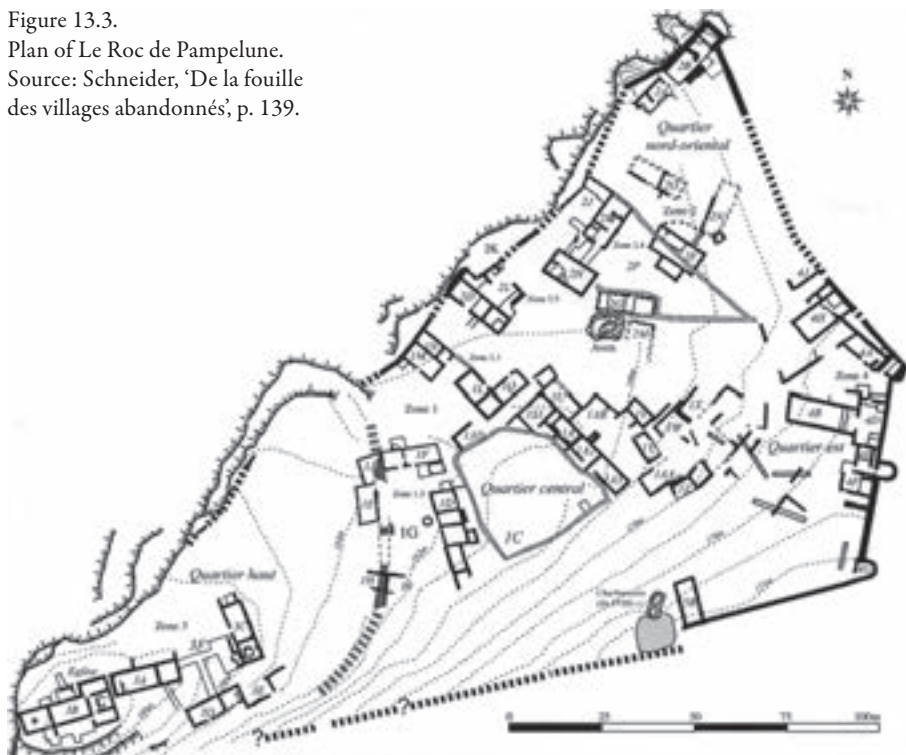
Let us now look at a third case, Le Roc de Pampelune, which includes both a baptismal church and a hilltop environment. It will offer a good transition to our discussion of new approaches to the study of early medieval settlements in the south of France, which follows. The baptistery of Le Roc de Pampelune (Argelliers, Hérault), 15 km from Montpellier, was built during the last third of the fifth century, beside a church. Both sit together at the highest part of a fortified hilltop (Figure 13.3). The entire seven-hectare site, made up of several house districts and an ecclesiastical precinct, was excavated during seven programmed campaigns between 1999 and 2005.²⁸

This sparsely populated forested region can be looked upon as a marginal space which attracted local settlement during late antiquity. Christianization was here a process contemporary with population movement and colonization. At the end of the fifth century, the hilltop village arose in this singular context as an *ex nihilo* creation. Archaeology reveals that the population practised some traditional activities, brought along with them, and added some new ones: carpentry, bronze and iron metallurgy, and glass workshops.²⁹ Imports of ceramics, lamps, and foodstuffs from North Africa and the eastern Mediterranean are quite striking in such an isolated area, but we will see below that Le Roc

²⁸ Excavations sponsored by the CNRS (Action Thématique sur Programme du département SHS) and by the Service Régional de l'Archéologie du Languedoc-Roussillon.

²⁹ Britton and others, 'Approche interdisciplinaire d'un bois'.

Figure 13.3.
Plan of Le Roc de Pampelune.
Source: Schneider, 'De la fouille
des villages abandonnés', p. 139.



de Pampelune is not the only hilltop site of the sixth and seventh centuries where such artefacts are found. Nevertheless, who initiated the abrupt creation of a carefully designed fortified settlement in a wilderness, with a technically specialized and plausibly non-native population? A private magnate, a civil or ecclesiastical authority, or some royal power: the question is open.

The archaeological analysis counts about a hundred separate buildings within the settlement area. The same building methods were used for the houses, the ecclesiastical structures, and the fortifications.³⁰ The location of the church (Figure 13.3, location 3B), not in the centre of the village but at the summit of the rocky hilltop, is worth noting. In the 1960s the church was first partially identified; excavations since 1999 have given a better understanding of its plan. It consisted of a single nave with a rectangular apse and two annexes: a baptistery and a small portico. Another building (Figure 13.3, location 3A), the biggest of the village, was created beside it, with the same orientation and axis.

³⁰ Pellecuer and Schneider, 'Premières églises et espace rural'.

What was this second building? Hypotheses include a clerical residence, another church, or (in my opinion the least likely) a place for public assembly. It appears to be slightly later in date than the other buildings on the site and did not have a funerary function: no burial evidence has been found in connection with this settlement during its brief occupation between 475 and 550. The church, therefore, appears to be the only candidate for the power that could have created this building. But who wielded this power? The traditional answer would be the bishop, in view of the baptistery and the emerging new diocese of Maguelone in the locality in the course of the sixth century. Perhaps it was the bishop, but this is not the only possible answer.

Le Roc de Pampelune was abandoned, apparently suddenly, soon after 530/40, as was its church. Thereafter, the ecclesiastical authorities appear to have lost interest in the site, with the exception of a few burials added near the church. It is therefore plausible to situate this extraordinarily new and very short-lived settlement in a political context. Its beginning fits with the takeover of this region by the Visigoth and Ostrogoth Kingdoms after 475, and its abandonment with the end of Ostrogothic power in 534, when the Franks took over in the south of Gaul.³¹ The fact that nothing on the site suggests a military population is merely negative evidence: weapons were precious, and they were often taken away when soldiers left a site or a battlefield. On similar sites, such as hilltops in the Jura, when a methodical prospection is done with metal detectors, several hundred metal artefacts and coins are discovered.³²

Opposing the military argument is the evidence of a normal civilian population with women and children, the latter sometimes buried in amphorae. This is hardly conclusive: late antique armies were made up of soldiers accompanied by their wives, children, and slaves, and why not craft specialists? The site might also have been a civil settlement sponsored by local aristocrats with economic, military, and social powers delegated by the new political authorities to control the territory. In other words, the new settlement, with its church, could be a clear expression of actions of new power and/or elites at a time of shifting frontiers.³³ Other hilltop sites tend to confirm this view, as we shall now discuss.

³¹ Delaplace, 'La "guerre de Provence"'; Delaplace 'La Provence sous la domination'.

³² Personal communication from D. Billon and Ph. Gandel (CNRS, UMR 5594, ARTEHIS, Université de Bourgogne) about recent excavations of hilltop sites in the Jura, presented in the Medieval Archaeology Seminar organized by the laboratories Archéologie Médiévale Méditerranéenne (UMR 6572, CNRS, Aix-en-Provence) and Archéologie des Sociétés Méditerranéennes (UMR 5140, CNRS, Lattes), Montpellier, 25 January 2012, coordination: L. Schneider and Cl. Raynaud (by courtesy of the authors and organizers).

³³ Delaplace, 'The Administrative Evolution'.



Map 13.3. Map of the Donzère gorge.
Source: Ode, 'Château-Porcher
et Saint-Saturnin', ill. 7.

Hilltop Sites and Hilltop Churches of the South of France and their Functions in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages

Until recently, hilltops were usually thought of as refuges, safe sites for temporary settlements without any political or administrative identity.³⁴ The abandonment of villas was a sign of social and economic alarm, explained by the collapse of the Roman Empire and the advent of the barbarian invasions. Very recently, several pessimistic publications about 'the fall of the Roman Empire' have revived this 'doom and gloom' scenario. Ten years later, what challenges does ongoing archaeological and historical research offer to this long accepted idea?

New data have enriched this debate as to the impact of the collapse of the Roman Empire, from recent Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS)-sponsored excavations, from

emergency excavations, and through (unpublished) doctoral theses.³⁵ As a result, some forty new sites in the south of France have enlarged our perspective.³⁶ Many of these sites were evidently strategic, in view of their natural hill-

³⁴ Debord, *Aristocratie et pouvoir*, p. 30, cited by Schneider, 'De la fouille des villages abandonnés'.

³⁵ For example in Ardèche and Auvergne (Clément, 'L'occupation du sol'; Martinez, 'Le paysage monumental'). Nicolas Clément worked on nineteen sites, of which twelve brought wholly new information. This new research concerns the whole arc of the French Mediterranean coast, also the Rhône valley, Auvergne, and Jura.

³⁶ In future years it will be interesting to expand into other regions, such as the central and eastern Pyrenees (e.g. Constant, *Du castrum à la seigneurie*) and the Alps. Research has been undertaken in Liguria and in the north of Italy (Brogiolo, 'Castrum tardo antichi'; Brogiolo and Chavarría Arnau, *Aristocrazie e campagna*; Brogiolo and Gelichi, *Nuove ricerche sui castelli*; De Vingo, 'Late Antique Mountain Settlements') and is beginning in Spain (Quirós Castillo and Tejado Sebastián, *Los castillos altomedievales*).

top situation and suitability to survey the local landscape and communication routes,³⁷ as is the case of the sites located in the Donzère gorge (Map 13.3).

In most of these sites, fortifications intensify this strategic function.³⁸ Few walls were made of rubble, as at Château-Porcher (Donzère), which had walls 5 m wide,³⁹ and Lombren (Gard), which also has a great tower. Constantine (Lançon de Provence, in Bouches-du-Rhône) has defensive ditches 10 to 15 m deep (Figure 13.4),⁴⁰ while at Saint-Blaise (Bouches-du-Rhône), the late antique wall has ten towers and is 400 m long.

³⁷ These are 'le Camp Romain' at Aumes (Hérault) (Mauné, "Le camp romain"); *Capraria*, Cabrières (Hérault) (Mauné, *Les campagnes de la cité*, pp. 148–49; Schneider, 'Capraria, Cabrières'); Castelviel, Aigüeze (Gard) (Clément, 'L'occupation du sol'; Schneider, 'Oppida et castra tardo', p. 442); Constantine, Lançon-de-Provence (Bouches-du-Rhône) (Février, 'Lançon-Provence'); Cornils, Lacoste (Hérault) (Garcia and Schneider, 'Cornils, Lacoste'); Donsère, (Drôme) (Ode, 'Château-Porcher et Saint-Saturnin'; Ode, 'Évolution du peuplement'; Schneider, 'Entre Antiquité et haut'; Laffont, *Châteaux du Vivarais*); Larina (Isère) (Schneider, 'Rythmes de l'occupation', pp. 47–51); Lombren (Gard) (Mauné, *Les campagnes de la cité de Béziers*, pp. 149–50; Charmasson and Raynaud, *Les agglomérations gallo-romaines*); Notre-Dame de Consolation, Jouques (Bouches-du-Rhône) (Michel d'Annville, 'L'occupation de l'oppidum'); Le Roc de Pampelune (Hérault) (see above); Saint-Blaise, Saint-Mitre-les-Rempart (Bouches-du-Rhône) (Demians d'Archambaud, *L'oppidum de Saint-Blaise*; Schneider, 'Oppida et castra tardo-antiques', pp. 436–39); Sainte-Candie, Roquebrune-sur-Argens (Var) (Bertoncello and Codou, 'Variations sur un thème'); Saint-Etienne-de-Dions, Saint-Marcel-d'Ardèche (Ardèche) (Clément, 'L'occupation du sol'; Ode, 'Évolution du peuplement').

³⁸ These are Bois Saint-Martin, Labeaume (Ardèche) (Laffont, *Châteaux du Vivarais*, p. 39); la Couronne à Molles (Allier) (Martinez, 'L'église paléochrétienne'); Donzère (Drôme) with two sites on two hilltops separated by a ravine: Château-Porcher, Châteauneuf-du-Rhône (Drôme) and Saint-Saturnin, Donzère/Châteauneuf-du-Rhône (Drôme) (Ode, 'Château-Porcher et Saint-Saturnin'; Ode, 'Évolution du peuplement'; Laffont, *Châteaux du Vivarais*, p. 43; Schneider, 'Entre Antiquité et haut Moyen', pp. 184–85); Lombren (Gard) (Mauné, *Les campagnes de la cité de Béziers*, pp. 149–50; Charmasson and Raynaud, 'Lombrun, Vénéjan (Gard)'); Millau, La Granède (Aveyron) (Saint-Pierre, 'Millau, La Granède'); Sainte-Candie, Roquebrune-sur-Argens (Var) (Bertoncello and Codou, 'Variations sur un thème'); Saint-Etienne-de-Dions, Saint-Marcel d'Ardèche (Ardèche) (Clément, 'L'occupation du sol'); Le Roc de Pampelune (see above); Saint-Blaise, Saint-Mitre-les-Rempart (Bouches-du-Rhône) (Schneider, 'Oppida et castra tardo-antiques', pp. 436–39).

³⁹ Ode, 'Château-Porcher et Saint-Saturnin'; Ode, 'Évolution du peuplement'.

⁴⁰ Oral communication of G. Duperron (UMR Lattes) about recent excavations on the oppidum of Constantine, presented in the Medieval Archaeology Seminar organized by the laboratories Archéologie Médiévale Méditerranéenne (UMR 6572, CNRS, Aix-en-Provence) and Archéologie des Sociétés Méditerranéennes (UMR 5140, CNRS, Lattes), Montpellier, 25 January 2012, coordination: L. Schneider and Cl. Raynaud (by courtesy of the author and the organizers).



Figure 13.4. Detail of the walls of the site of Constantine, Lançon de Provence, Bouches-du-Rhône. Photo by G. Duperron (UMR Lattes).

There is evidence for settlement planning at four of the excavated sites: Larina (Isère) has regular house plots;⁴¹ Le Roc de Pampelune has minor planned streets;⁴² Lombren has an orthogonal network of small streets;⁴³ and in Saint-Blaise a late fifth- / early sixth-century redevelopment was detected to a unified plan with a few large house plots.⁴⁴

These three elements — a strategic situation, defensive works, and settlement planning — are the foundation for the hypothesis of a structural change in the settlement patterns during the early Middle Ages, the end result of a social or political evolution. We will return to this model later.

⁴¹ Schneider 'Rythmes de l'occupation rurale', p. 47.

⁴² Pellecuer and Schneider, 'Premières églises et espace rural', p. 106.

⁴³ Charmasson and Raynaud, 'Lombrun, Vénéjan', p. 780.

⁴⁴ Demians d'Archambeaud, *L'oppidum de Saint-Blaise*; Schneider, '*Oppida et castra tardo-antiques*'.

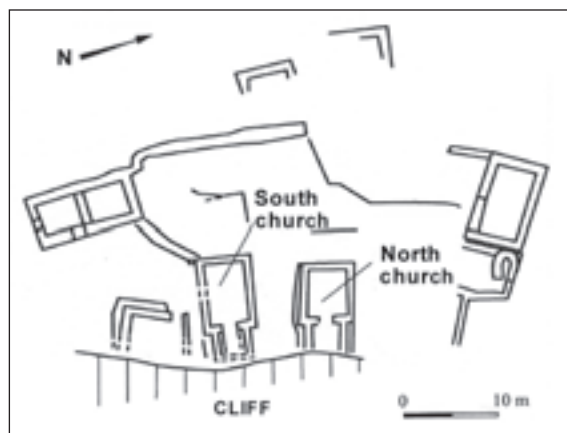


Figure 13.5.
Plan of Les Rochers de Carabasse.
Source: Clément, 'Recherches
archéologiques aux Rochers'.

Some sites attest artefacts imported from North Africa and the eastern Mediterranean.⁴⁵ a recent synthesis depicts the south of Gaul as part of a Mediterranean trade zone.⁴⁶ These goods testify to the level of wealth of some or all of the population and can be interpreted as conspicuous consumption. Consequently, this was a socially stratified population, with activity beyond the agricultural. The development of industrial activities noted above for Le Roc de Pampelune can be seen at all other hilltop sites, with metal smithing being particularly important.

We will now focus on the churches which were present at almost all of these hilltop sites.⁴⁷ At Cornils (Lacoste, Hérault) written sources attest a church from the beginning of the twelfth century; archaeology might identify earlier ones. In the Rhône valley, at Soyons (Ardèche) a church dedicated to Saint-Gervais was built, perhaps by Bishop Apollinaire of Valence (d. 520) in the Malpas

⁴⁵ These are in 'Le camp de César', Laudun (Gard) (Goury, 'Le Camp de César'); in le 'camp romain' at Aumes (Hérault) (Mauné, *Les campagnes*, p. 323); in Château-Porcher, Châteauneuf-du-Rhône (Drôme) (Ode, '4.1.2 Évolution du peuplement'); in 'l'hermitage', Ales (Gard) (Clément, 'L'occupation du sol'); in Le Roc de Pampelune (Hérault) (Schneider, 'Rythmes de l'occupation rurale'); in San-Peyre (Gard) (Pellecuer and Pène, 'San-Peyre'); in Saint-Blaise and in Constantine, Lançon-de-Provence (Bouches-du-Rhône) with the discovery of one hundred amphorae, 50% of which are of east Mediterranean origin (oral communication of G. Duperron).

⁴⁶ Bonifay and Raynaud, 'Echanges et consommation'.

⁴⁷ Exceptions are Anduze, *Capraria*, Château-Porcher (but nearby Saint-Saturnin has a church), Lombren, and Mormellicum. On the relation between late antique hilltop sites and churches in the neighbouring region of northern Italy, see Alexandra Chavarría's contribution to this volume.



Figure 13.6. The excavation of the church of La Couronne.

Source: Martinez, 'L'église paléochrétienne', fig. 1.

oppidum that had been occupied during the Iron Age and Roman periods, but not in late antiquity.⁴⁸ A church dedicated to St John is known in an unexcavated part of 'Le camp de César' in Laudun (Gard),⁴⁹ but this monument could have been constructed later, which may also be the case for the ninth century at Beaulieu, Les Rochers de Carabasse (Ardèche),⁵⁰ and two small churches constructed on a hilltop occupied since the eighth century. The first is an east–west oriented structure 9×4.6 m with a flat apse; the second, 4.8 m to the north, is a possible baptistery (Figure 13.5). At Saint-Roman (Ardèche) a building has been identified as a Carolingian church (11.6×5.4 m), with a semicircular apse and a nave 4 m wide.⁵¹ In a few cases, a community of canons is attested in these places from the twelfth century. This suggests that the Christianization of hilltops may be an older phenomenon, promoted by an ecclesiastical decision to

⁴⁸ Laffont, *Châteaux du Vivarais*, p. 45.

⁴⁹ Schneider, 'Oppida et castra tardo-antiques', p. 436.

⁵⁰ Clément, 'L'occupation du sol'; Laffont, *Châteaux du Vivarais*, p. 39.

⁵¹ Clément, 'L'occupation du sol'.

mark the boundaries of a diocese from the ninth century, or perhaps earlier, as has been convincingly argued for the diocese of Frejus (Var).⁵²

Apparently, the architectural and physical settings of these hilltop churches are not different to other contemporary buildings in rural or semiurban context. However, we can surmise that these hilltop churches were a crucial element of ecclesiastical organization. In at least four cases, the mise en scène of the church is obvious: at Constantine, Millau la Granède (Millau), La Couronne at Molles (Figure 13.6), and Le Roc de Pampelune, the church is visible for miles around. Churches were erected with a baptistery, as early as the fifth century, in four possible cases: Les Rochers de Carabasse, Millau la Granède, La Couronne, and Le Roc de Pampelune. Even though there are no churches attested at the ninth-century *castra* at Anduze and Mormellicum, Schneider has argued that many hilltop sites such as these prefigured later administrative centres, with judicial or parish functions.⁵³

Recently, the behaviour of 'local' aristocrats and elites and the degree of their integration into transregional systems of power have received increased attention for the late antique and early medieval periods.⁵⁴ Existing models hold that the agency of powerful regional and subregional aristocrats were responsible for shifts in the location and nature of rural settlement and land use in the early Middle Ages. The construction and control of churches was of great importance to this, and large terracing projects signalled increasing aristocratic power. This reinforcement of the elites is a major factor in most archaeological studies of hilltop sites, where an aristocratic presence has been directly inferred in several cases. At Larina an aristocratic tomb has been identified, at l'Hermitage a monetary weight was found with two imperial effigies, and at San-Peyre, Le Mont Bouquet (Gard), an Umayyad seal (661–750) was discovered.⁵⁵

At other sites residential villas have been discovered without any village or church nearby, at Sampzon, La Tuilière (Ardèche) with a villa and ther-

⁵² Bertoncello and Codou 'Variations sur un thème'. It will be interesting to apply this theory to rival territories between two bishoprics for Cornils, specifically between Viviers and Uzès in the case of Saint-Roman. Here, the later toponym 'Ermitage de Saint-Romain' suggests the presence of a hermitage on this site, which was another means by which bishops marked their territories (Delaplace, 'Géographie de l'érémisme en Gaule').

⁵³ Schneider, 'Caparia, Cabrières (Hérault)'; Schneider, 'Entre Antiquité et haut Moyen Âge'.

⁵⁴ Delaplace, *La fin de l'Empire romain d'Occident*.

⁵⁵ Pellecuer and Pene, 'San-Peyre, (Bouquet, hameau de Suzon), Gard'; Schneider, 'Rythmes de l'occupation rurale', p. 49.



Figure 13.7. Southern front of the 'castrum' La Malène (sixth–seventh centuries AD), Gévaudan.
Photograph by Laurent Schneider, CNRS-Aix-Marseille Université.

mal complex,⁵⁶ and at Saint-Thomé, le Village (Ardèche), a residential villa and a funerary site with an episcopal epitaph. This is the epitaph of a bishop of Viviers, dead in 487, Lucianus or Promotus, one of the first bishops of the city. He was thus not buried in his episcopal see but surely on the aristocratic estate of his family. These two examples are comparable to other aristocratic late antique or early medieval villas in the Rhône valley.⁵⁷ Hilltop villages with a church or isolated churches on hillforts were one expression of the power of local elites. They continued to own large estates in the plains, but the villas were becoming less numerous and may have been integrated into a new system of control over the economy and the peasants. The hilltop sites would have been the predominant feature.

Let us take a look at one final site to illustrate this hypothesis: La Malène (Lozère) in the Gorges du Tarn (Figure 13.7), discovered three years ago by

⁵⁶ Clément, 'L'occupation du sol'.

⁵⁷ These are la Chatelarde, Poncin (Ain) (Faure-Boucharlat, *Vivre à la champagne*, p. 31; Schneider, 'Rythmes de l'occupation rurale', p. 43); Saint-Julien-de-Jalionas, 5 km from Larina (Isère) (Schneider, 'Rythmes de l'occupation rurale', p. 49); Saint-Pierre-du-Palais and Saint-Vincent-de-Barnavon near Château-Porcher (Ode, 'Château-Porcher et Saint-Saturnin'); or many examples in Provence and Languedoc-Roussillon: villa of Saint-Pierre-de-Vence, Eyguière (Bouches-du-Rhône), villa of Pardigon 2, Lacroix-Valme, villa de Pèbres, Vinon-sur-Verdon, La Ramière, Roquemaure (Gard) (Schneider, 'Rythmes de l'occupation rurale', pp. 40–46).

Nicolas Clément and Laurent Schneider. Here, the excavations required the help of a sporting association, so dangerous is the access to this very steep mountaintop! A tower, a large residential building (45 × 7.5 m) with a ceremonial gallery, a thermal complex, and perhaps a church were discovered within a site defended by thick walls.⁵⁸ La Malène displays all the characteristics proposed above for the typology of hilltop sites except, so far, a village beside or near or the elite residence. Written sources confirm the existence of a *castellum* at La Malène for the sixth and seventh centuries, thus corroborating, like the archaeological data (coins and amphorae), the elite character and strategic importance of this early medieval stronghold. The *castellum* was also a striking symbol of power, a 'mise en scène' of the elites who governed from it. It will be very interesting to learn more, as excavation and analysis proceeds, about the exact chronology and the nature and function of a church in this context.

Conclusions

The dialogue between the centre and the regions is key to understanding the articulation of political and religious power at the close of late antique Gaul. The fusion of all different aristocracies, Burgundian, Visigothic, Frankish, and the old Roman families who have merged with them, had broken down the power of the Roman provincial aristocracy when barbarian kingdoms began a new reality after 476. Political power became more localized, whilst regional power remained concentrated in the cities. The old Roman-Gaul aristocracies did not become extinct, but focused their cultural and social investment in new symbols of power such as the private foundation of churches and the occupation of hilltop sites.

Recent archaeological investigation of sites from this period of transformation reveal great changes in settlement patterns and the development of new focal places of social power in rural areas. Sometimes these power centres were baptismal churches, like Loupian or Roujan, where bishops were the main political agents. Other times, the decline of villa sites across all regions led to the concentration of aristocratic settlement inside castles and hilltop sites, as has been discovered recently in northern Spain, the south of France, Liguria, and central Italy.

Thus, not all the social and economic power of the late Roman aristocracies collapsed. We have noted the importance of the visibility of the hilltop sites.

⁵⁸ Schneider and Clément, 'Le castellum de La Malène'.

On most of sites, a real 'mise en scène' was carefully chosen. These new hilltop settlement sites may have developed during the second half of the fifth century (and earlier in Spain and Italy) by aristocracies and local elites as regional Roman networks of social power declined. The construction of highly visible churches on these hilltop settlements was one of the symbols of this rise in aristocratic power.

It is hoped that by investigating new regions, notably Pyrénées, Limousin, Auvergne, and the Centre, where Bourgeois has begun to organize a similar programme embracing both hilltops and cave sites,⁵⁹ more light will be shed on this important period when a new type of settlement — a kind of protocastle — was reshaping the landscape. New research programmes promise much, thanks to collaboration between the Services Régionaux de l'Archéologie, Institut national de recherches archéologiques préventives, private archaeological companies, CNRS research laboratories, and the universities, and may mark the beginning of a revival of early medieval rural archaeology in these regions.

⁵⁹ Bourgeois, 'Vingt ans de recherches'.

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Part IV

Churches as Centres of Power

ARCHITECTURE AND POWER AT THE END OF THE LOMBARD KINGDOM

Gian Pietro Brogiolo

Introduction

The fifty years between 725 and 774 were a critical period for Italy, characterized by a series of key events within a more general international political context, which in the Italian peninsula led to confrontation, resolution, and a new equilibrium. In Italy the principal protagonists were the Pope, newly delivered from the Byzantine sphere of influence as a consequence of the crisis of iconoclasm,¹ and the Lombard kings, starting with Liutprand, who were unwilling to confront the Pope and to realize the prospect of the reunification of Italy.² The outcome was fatal for the Lombards, because of the alliance between the Pope and the Frankish kings, first Pippin, later Charlemagne; however, it gave rise to new perspectives on the whole of Europe, with the formation of the Carolingian Empire.

In a tense European framework of political and military rivalry and conflict, those in power made the utmost use of all the tools of propaganda available to achieve consensus. The papacy resorted to the spiritual power of religion, to relics, tangible vehicles of exchange, which the popes, Stephan II and Paul I in particular, systematically collected from the suburban cemeteries of Rome, taking them back to town or gifting them to their peers in the contemporary networks of power. The Lombard kings, on their side, turned all expressions

¹ Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter*.

² Delogu, 'Il regno longobardo'.

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of their power to good account: literary works, such as *Laudes Mediolanensis civitatis* of 739;³ the short laudatory compositions of Paul the Deacon carved as epigraphic texts and displayed on buildings, like San Salvatore in Brescia and the palace chapel of Arechis II at Salerno; and saints' lives commissioned and composed in connection with the evergetism associated with the acquisition of particular relics. However, by far the most meaningful expression of power is to be found in architecture,⁴ the topic I am going to address in the following text.

In northern Italy, in the theatre of the political and military confrontation which led to the victory of Charlemagne, three churches, Santa Maria in Valle at Cividale, San Salvatore at Brescia, and Santa Maria *foris portas* at Castelseprio, survive above ground, with substantial elements of their rich programmes of figural imagery and ornament still preserved (Map 14.1). Even though these buildings have been at the centre of historiographical debate for half a century, there is still no scholarly consensus as to their dating, whether eighth-century Lombard or ninth-century Carolingian. For Santa Maria in Valle at Cividale and San Salvatore in Brescia, there is general agreement that, despite differences in their design, they share similar building and decoration techniques and therefore were probably both the work of the same craftsmen.⁵ This theory has been confirmed by recent stratigraphic analysis. The dating of these monuments, with their original architectonic structure and decorative programmes of stuccoes and paintings in large part preserved, wavers between 750–60, on the one hand, and the middle decades of the ninth century, on the other. The third building, Santa Maria *foris portas* at Castelseprio,⁶ differs radically from these in construction and decoration. In this case, dates ranging from the sixth to the mid-ninth (tenth?) century have been proposed by archaeologists and art historians, although scientific old and new dating-indices (¹⁴C and thermoluminescence⁷) place its foundation in the middle of the sixth or, more

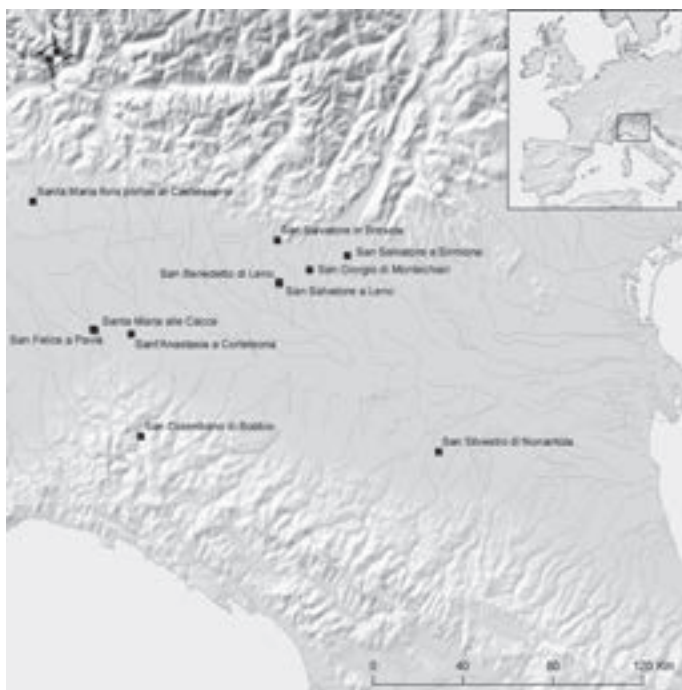
³ Pighi, *Versus de Verona*.

⁴ Mitchell, 'Artistic Patronage and Cultural Strategies in Lombard Italy'; Bertelli and Brogiolo, *Il futuro dei Longobardi*.

⁵ L'Orange and Torp, *Il Tempietto Longobardo di Cividale*; Panazza, 'L'arte dal secolo VII al sec. XI'.

⁶ Bognetti, Chierici, and De Capitano d'Arzago, *Santa Maria di Castelseprio*. On the excavations in the early 1980s, see Brogiolo and Carver, 'Castelseprio (Va). 4.a campagna di scavo'; Carver, 'S. Maria foris portas at Castelseprio'.

⁷ Leveto-Jabr, 'Carbon-14 Dating of Wood from the East Apse of Santa Maria at Castel Seprio', pp. 17–18; Martini, Sibilia, and Spinolo, 'Santa Maria Foris Portas', pp. 215–17; Brogiolo, 'Per una storia religiosa di Castelseprio'.



Map 14.1.
Map of Lombardy,
showing the main
places mentioned in
the text. Map by José
Carlos Sánchez-Pardo
using Demis WMS
World Map.

probably, in the early Carolingian period, while the famous frescos are possibly from the middle of the tenth century, a dating that put the church outside the context discussed in this paper.

The absolute dating of these churches is not a minor issue. On it hangs an accurate understanding of the nature of elite visual culture in the last decades of Lombard rule in Italy, on the one hand, of artistic expression and taste favoured by Carolingian patrons, in the succeeding age, on the other. To get these monuments wrong is to fail to discern the visual dynamics of Europe, in one of its most vital and inventive theatres, between the mid-eighth and the mid-ninth centuries.

Northern Italy, and particularly the court of Pavia, from the age of King Liutprand (712–44) was the centre of a cultural ‘renaissance’ documented mainly by high-quality sculptural decorations and, to a lesser extent, from architectures (mainly the church of Santa Maria alle Cacce at Pavia). The evolution of these cultural manifestations has been discussed at length. A special issue of debate has been whether the churches of Santa Maria in Valle and San Salvatore at Brescia, linked to the kings Ratchis and Astolfus born in Cividale and King Desiderius whose court was at Brescia, represent the highest level of this tradi-

tion or if, on the contrary, this artistic evolution finished after the kingdom of Liutprand (+744) and did not restart again until the Carolingian conquest.

In the present paper, first I shall discuss the outcomes of recent investigation of the fabric of the church of San Salvatore in Brescia, the date of which, I would propose, should be set in the reign of King Desiderius, around 760. San Salvatore should be seen as a symbolic monument, founded and built by the will of the King. We could term it a 'dynastic church', for the construction of which the King drew on all the means in his power — both ideological and technical. Then I shall attempt to contextualize the results of this investigation, by comparing San Salvatore with other Lombard royal ecclesiastical foundations. Finally, I shall discuss the architecture of the church in the context of the political and economic background of the final decades of the Lombard kingdom. The conclusion is therefore that this period represents the last stage of a long process of confrontation and integration between the Lombard population (fragmented between Catholic, Arian, and pagan components) and the Roman one. In this process religion becomes a reference point and a crucial element for social legitimation. Between the seventh and eighth centuries churches will multiply in the cities and the countryside, founded by different social levels: the king, the aristocracies, and the local communities. During the last twenty-five years of the reign (750–74) church foundation will also become a competition subject between Lombards and the papacy. At the end the winners of this competition, the pope and Charles the Great — such as a part of modern historiography — played down the contribution of Lombards to the artistic culture of that period.

The Church of San Salvatore at Brescia

The last thirty years has seen intense research on the church of San Salvatore (Figure 14.1), in particular, extensive excavation of the structures of the monastery and of the nuns' graveyard, together with stratigraphic analysis of the standing fabric of the church and its crypt. It has been demonstrated that the crypt never formed part of an older cross-shaped plan church (San Salvatore I) discovered in the excavations of 1958–60, and later reused by the current church (San Salvatore II). The crypt, without any doubt pertains to San Salvatore II.⁸

⁸ Brogiolo, 'Analisi stratigrafica del San Salvatore di Brescia', pp. 25–40; Brogiolo, 'La sequenza altomedievale della cripta di San Salvatore in Brescia', pp. 35–39. Jacobsen, 'Paulinus und die Baukunst', does not accept my sequence.

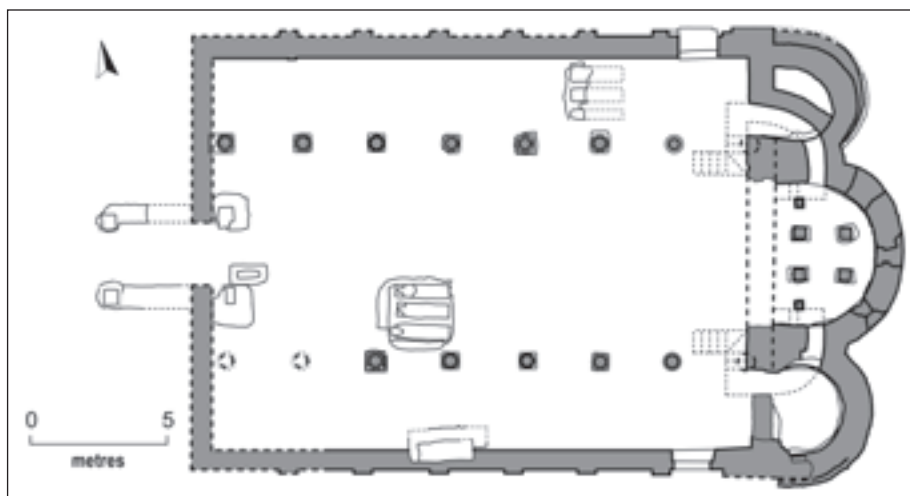


Figure 14.1. Church plan of San Salvatore at Brescia. Figure by the author.

However, it was only in December 2009 that scaffolding afforded close access to the nave walls, making possible a closer examination of the masonry and its decorative covering, so that definitive solutions to some outstanding issues relating to the chronology and the constructional phases of the church could be proposed.⁹ The problem of the relationship between architectural structure and decorative embellishment seems now to have been resolved, finally laying to rest the old hypothesis which had assigned structure and decoration to two different periods (the architecture to the Lombard Age, the decoration to the Carolingian Age). The attribution of the church, together with its finishing and fittings, to the evergetic agency of Desiderius, the last Lombard king, and his wife Ansa is likely to be correct, on the evidence of the results of recent ¹⁴C tests on three reeds used as reinforcing elements in the stuccoes.¹⁰

The idea of a dynastic church was widespread at the time. Imperial mausolea attached to churches are attested from the age of Constantine.¹¹ The Frankish

⁹ Brogiolo and others, 'Ulteriori ricerche sul San Salvatore'.

¹⁰ LTL4686A: 95.4% probability: 760±140; 68.2% probability: 715±65; 4.4% probability: 800±10; LTL4684: 75% probability: 685±45; 55.7% probability: 675±25; 20.4% probability: 755±15; LTL4685A: 95.4% probability: 760±110; 68.2% probability: 720±60 (analysis made in the ¹⁴C laboratory at the University of Lecce). The second sample excludes a date after 770; the first and the third have a median date of 760 with 95.4% of probability.

¹¹ Johnson, *The Roman Imperial Mausoleum in Late Antiquity*.

kings founded church-mausolea from the time of Clovis, at Saint-Denis, the Lombard kings from the time of Agilulf and Teodolinda, at Monza around 600, subsequently in a series of foundations in Pavia,¹² and later still, around the mid-eighth century, with the kings Ratchis and/or Aistulf, at Cividale, assuming that Santa Maria in Valle, built inside the king's court, was established and built by one of these two rulers.

From the concept to the project, the development was strongly influenced by a number of ideological determinants.

(1) The church was located in an area west of the city and in one of the two centres of Brescian civil power belonging to the king's court, an area which, according to a document of 759, Desiderius had received as a donation from King Aistulf. Therefore, it was not a place of little significance, rather a centre of civil power, in which a church and some associated buildings were already present. The construction of a monastery meant taking possession of this place through a more ambitious and higher-profile evergetic enterprise.

(2) The architectural form chosen, an aisled structure with three apses, had already been used a few decades earlier in a royal foundation in Pavia, Santa Maria alle Cacce.¹³ On the other hand, it shows cultural distance from the other main Lombard centers: Spoleto, where the two surviving possibly Lombard churches make heavy reference to classical models, and Benevento. The 'Tempietto', near the source of the river Clitunno (Spoleto), takes a Roman temple as its model: a barrel-vaulted nave with a little apse preceded by an imposing porch with columns which support a triangular pediment.¹⁴ The suburban church of San Salvatore at Spoleto had aisles separated from the nave by columns which support a Doric trabeation; the presbitery is vaulted by a lofty segmented cupola.¹⁵ The church of Santa Sofia at Benevento, built by Arechis II, the son-in-law of King Desiderius, in 760, is also a highly sophisticated architectural structure, on a central plan, which has been attributed to Byzantine craftsmen. Here, a circling arcade of magnificent spoliated ancient columns, framed by an ambulatory, is covered by a composite vault resting on arches and crowned possibly by a central domical lantern.¹⁶

¹² Krüger, *Königsgrabkirchen der Franken, Angelsachsen und Langobarden*.

¹³ Blake, 'S. Maria delle Cacce: lo scavo archeologico del 1979'.

¹⁴ Emerick, *The Tempietto del Clitunno near Spoleto*.

¹⁵ Jäggi, *San Salvatore in Spoleto*.

¹⁶ Carella, 'Sainte-Sophie de Bénévent'.

(3) The use of *spolia* as building material is a feature common to all Lombard churches¹⁷ and shows, as is well known, a clear ideological link with the power of classicism, mirrored not only in the architecture but also in the way of life of the elite in medieval society.¹⁸ This phenomenon is exemplified in the inscription which commemorates the construction of a palace church built by King Liutprand at Corteolona, just a few kilometres from Pavia.¹⁹ This records how the King, while in Rome praying by the tomb of St Anastasius, abandoned the construction of a bath complex in his palace and instead built a church dedicated to this saint, embellishing it with *spolia* recovered from the Eternal City.²⁰

The church of San Salvatore at Brescia significantly comprises a quantity of *spolia*,²¹ some, including basket-shaped capitals, probably obtained in Ravenna following the conquest of the city by King Aistulf in 752. This is a deliberate choice which reveals the relationships existing with the exarchate, contacts which were strengthened after the Lombard conquest. Roman columns and capitals represented an index of quality and status in Lombard constructions at the highest level, as evidenced in the Pavia churches of Santa Maria alle Cacce and San Salvatore. In San Salvatore at Brescia three Roman sarcophagi, representing the Amazons, the Three Graces, and the story of Jonah, were reused as paving slabs in the Romanesque phase.²² It has been proposed, in the light of a late source which refers to Queen Ansa as having been buried in a grand sarcophagus, that these may have been reused as privileged graves during the Lombard period. If true, this would represent a precedent for the re-employment of prestigious Roman sarcophagi by the Carolingians.

(4) For the construction and decoration of San Salvatore skilled workers were recruited, and it is highly likely that these were the craftsmen who previously had been responsible for Santa Maria in Valle in Cividale.²³ On this there is consensus due to similarities in the brickwork of each church, similar ornate stucco archivaults, and similar wall paintings executed in the same technique and style. These innovative paintings comprise a new visual language of narra-

¹⁷ Mitchell, 'The Uses of Spolia in Longobard Italy'.

¹⁸ Arce, 'Dagli imperatori ai re barbari: simboli e rappresentazioni del potere'.

¹⁹ Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum*, VI, 58.

²⁰ MGH, *Poetae latini aevi Carolini*, I, 105–06.

²¹ Cutler, 'Reuse or Use?'; Effros, 'Monuments and Memory'.

²² Morandini, 'Sarcophagi di età romana reimpiegati nel monastero di Santa Giulia'.

²³ L'Orange and Torp, *Il Tempietto Longobardo di Cividale*.

tive panels along the church walls, which is used for the first time in these monuments, and which would go on to enjoy great success in the Carolingian Age.

These were skilled artisans who had a history of working for royal patrons and followed a tradition already established at the end of the seventh century, as evidenced by a contemporary document recording exemplary remuneration for a range of construction activities, known as *De mercede magistris commacinatorum*.²⁴

These skilled craftsmen were required by their patrons to carry out a comprehensive project for a dynastic funerary church, with architecture, ornamentation, and graves designed and executed following a pre-established plan.²⁵ This is clear from a number of details: (a) iron cramps to secure the stucco embellishment of the archivaults of the nave arcades set into the mortar of the arches while it was still wet; (b) the sequence of stuccoes and frescoes in mutually interconnected stratified phases; (c) elaborately carved screens enclosing the sanctuary, belonging to the original design; (d) major graves, also part of the original plan and in phase with the primary fabric of the building. Due to the partial preservation of the monument, the number of these primary graves is uncertain. Those which survive include an arcosolium grave built into the southern external wall, traditionally thought to be the tomb of Queen Ansa, and three block-built graves with double-pitched cappuccino tiled covers, set within a rectangular enclosure which rose above the pavement level and abutted the outer face of the sanctuary enclosure.

(5) However, before the project was completed a further event occurred: a crypt, which did not form part of the original design, was most likely inserted while work on the church was in progress. This is suggested by the form of the central apse, with complex access routes from the central nave, down steps, via the side-apses, then narrow corridors and further steps, down to the pavement of the crypt itself. This area also presents the main stratigraphic problems in the church, as it involves a complex sequence of building phases,²⁶ in particular the relationship of the walls of the crypt and the access passages to the east wall of the nave. It is difficult to assess the significance of these relationships:

²⁴ Lomartire, 'Commacini e marmorarii'; Brogiolo, 'Architetture e tecniche costruttive in età longobarda'.

²⁵ Brogiolo and others, 'Ulteriori ricerche sul San Salvatore II di Brescia'.

²⁶ Brogiolo, 'Analisi stratigrafica del San Salvatore di Brescia'; Brogiolo, 'La sequenza alto-medievale della cripta di San Salvatore in Brescia'; Brogiolo, Ibsen, and Gheroldi, 'Nuovi dati sulla cripta del San Salvatore di Brescia'.

whether they represent a simple building phase, a redesign of the eastern end while works were in progress, or a later phase after a partial dismantling of an earlier apse. There are three possible interpretations of these stratigraphic relationships: (a) the crypt might be associated with a second construction phase of the present building;²⁷ (b) the crypt might be assigned to the initial construction phase of the second church (as suggested by Uwe Lobbedey);²⁸ (c) the crypt may be the result of a change of plan during construction.

From the outset, Desiderius and Ansa had undoubtedly intended to deposit a relic of Santa Giulia in the church they were going to found. The relic of Santa Giulia, which was to become the most famed possession of the community, with the monastery assuming the name of the saint at the end of the ninth century, was obtained from the island of Gorgona, off the coast of Tuscany. Relics of some Roman saints, also deposited in the crypt, were donated by Paul I in 762, a pope who, according to a late source, was present at the dedication of the church on 28 October 763.²⁹ It is possible that the crypt, which did not form part of the original design, was constructed to hold these new Roman relics.

(6) An integrated unity of architecture and sculptural and painted decoration, featuring a major programme of painted narratives, anticipated Carolingian practice in the following century. Specifically, inscriptions played a critical role, as vehicles of propaganda to convey the ideas and intentions underlying this investment: firstly, the fragmentary inscription running over the south nave arcade, beneath the painted narratives illustrating the story of St Giulia, in which only two words are clearly legible 'REGNANTEM DESIDERIUM', enough, however, to connect the king with the church (maybe also with the translation of the relics of the saint);³⁰ secondly, a long inscription (now unfortunately lost) in letters of gilded bronze, composed by Paul the Deacon, most probably for the arcosolium tomb of Ansa, to celebrate the glory of the queen and her family;³¹ and finally, there were other inscriptions, transcribed in late medieval sources, connecting Queen Ansa with St Giulia.

These multivarious visual messages were all located inside the church. The exterior walls are articulated simply with a series of blank arched recesses, in the same manner as other surviving royal and elite foundations in northern Italy, of

²⁷ Brogiolo, 'Analisi stratigrafica del San Salvatore di Brescia'.

²⁸ Lobbedey, Jakobs, and Reichwald, *Brescia, San Salvatore*.

²⁹ Biblioteca Querliniana di Brescia, MS H.VI.11, c. 1; Brogiolo, 'Gli edifici monastici nelle fasi altomedievali', pp. 61–70.

³⁰ De Rubeis, 'Desiderio re o Ludovico imperatore?', pp. 103–04.

³¹ *MGH, Poetae latini aevi carolini*, I, 24–26.



Figure 14.2. Church crypt of San Felice at Pavia. Figure by the author.

the central decades of the eighth century, the fronts of which are still preserved. In Pavia (Santa Maria alle Cacce and San Felice), in Sirmione (San Salvatore), and in Cividale (Santa Maria in Valle), churches had plain, unadorned exteriors, aside from their lime-washed blind arcades, still visible at San Felice in Pavia and at San Salvatore in Brescia.

In short, the undertaking involved (a) an idea (the dynastic funerary church); (b) a project entrusted to craftsmen who had already been active for King Aistulf; (c) the incorporation of *spolia*, redeployed ancient architectural elements charged with high symbolic value; and (d) a clear project of visual messages through the church.

Churches Related to San Salvatore and Other Churches Built by King Desiderius

Among the properties (*curtes*) belonging to the monastery of San Salvatore, two churches, San Felice at Pavia and San Salvatore at Sirmione, are still partially preserved in elevation. Both churches owed their existence to the same royal patronage and reveal a similar quality of investment. There has been no excavation in the possessions of the monastery in other territories, but some surviving elements, such as the sculpture (as in the church of San Martino di Gusnago, at Ceresara³²) testify to royal involvement, to the participation of the same craftsmen who had been active in Brescia.

The church of San Felice at Pavia, built by the royal couple, Desiderius and Ansa, and donated to the Brescian monastery in the year 760,³³ was originally

³² Chavarría and Crosato, 'La cristianizzazione delle campagne nella provincia di Mantova'.

³³ Brühl, *Codice Diplomatico Longobardo*, III, n. 33.



Figure 14.3. Church crypt of Santa Maria alle Cacce at Pavia. Photograph by the author.

dedicated to the Virgin Mary and SS Peter and Paul. Later (before 771) it was given the name of San Salvatore. Finally in the tenth century it assumed its present dedication.³⁴

The early medieval church had a single nave, three apses, and a transverse crypt. A section of the south wall, the apses, and the crypt are still preserved (Figure 14.2). The southern wall (the only wall of the original structure which is now visible) was built with reused — and for the most part broken — Roman bricks. On the exterior, the wall was articulated by arches, some of which framed windows of varying dimensions, while others were blind. Here incised plaster, *a falsa cortina*, in imitation of brickwork, recalls the worked surface of the southern wall at San Salvatore in Brescia. Excavations at San Felice identified the foundations of the façade and an atrium containing the burials of a number of early abbesses: eight tombs have been found, two of them (nos 61 and 133) with painted inscriptions on their interior walls, one of which (no. 61) refers to Abbess Aripurga.³⁵

³⁴ Hudson, 'Pavia: l'evoluzione urbanistica di una capitale altomedievale', p. 248.

³⁵ Invernizzi, 'Pavia, ex chiesa di S. Felice', pp. 248–49.

Figure 14.4.
Church plan of
San Salvatore at
Sirmione. Figure
by Lisa Cervigni.



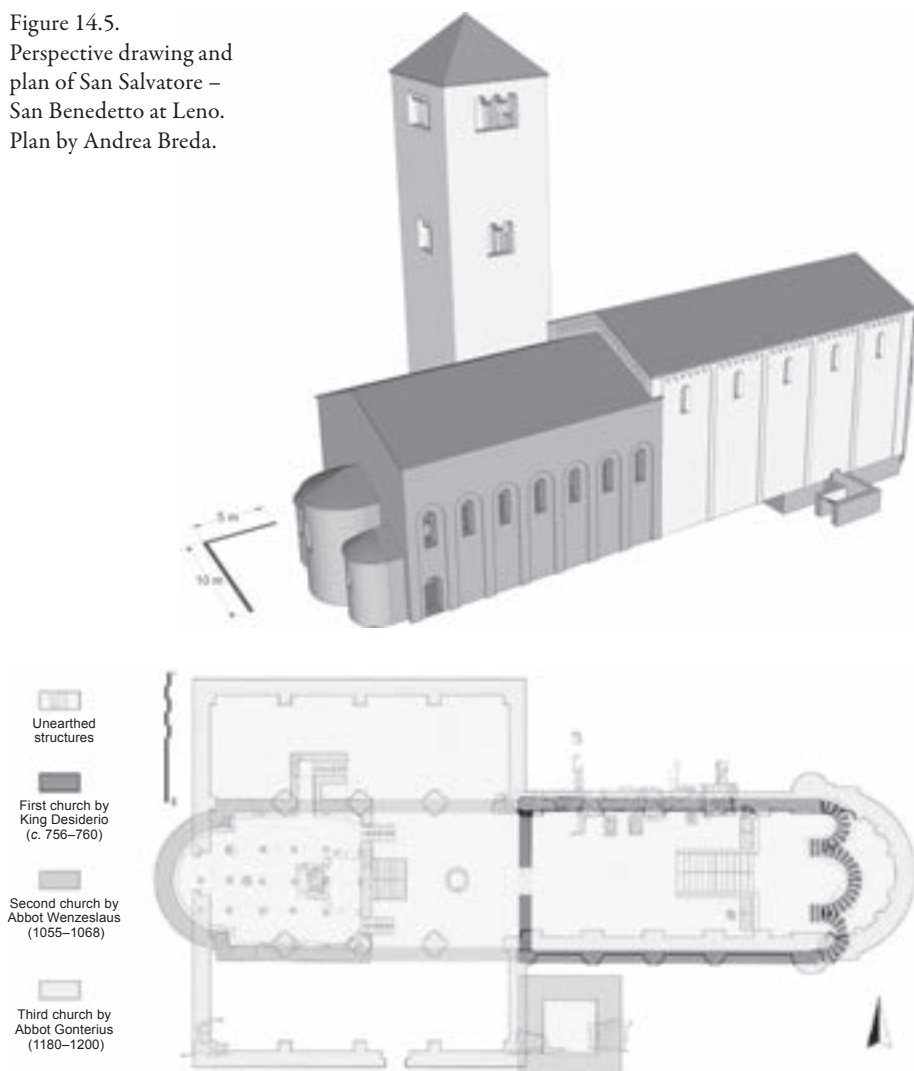
From these surviving features it is possible to reconstruct a rectangular building with a single nave measuring 8×15 m, and with three apses and an atrium *c.* 10 m in length. Subsequently, probably at the end of the tenth century, the church was further extended, to enclose the atrium, reaching 25.5 m, later extended to 31 m. The arches on the outer face of the southern wall, rising from a brickwork base, have their analogues at San Salvatore in Brescia and at Santa Maria alle Cacce in Pavia. The crypt is similar to those in Santa Maria alle Cacce (Figure 14.3) and in San Salvatore at Sirmione.

This last church, San Salvatore at Sirmione (Figure 14.4), was founded by Queen Ansa in the 760s. Before 772 it was a dependency of the monastery of San Salvatore in Brescia.³⁶ Recent excavations have shown that the standing walls belong to the original construction.³⁷ It is a single-naved building, with three apses and a transverse crypt, similar to San Felice at Pavia. Some motifs of the wall paintings still partially preserved in the crypt of Sirmione

³⁶ *MGH, Diplomata Karolinorum*, I, 115.

³⁷ Cervigni, 'Nuove ricerche sul monastero di San Salvatore di Sirmione'.

Figure 14.5.
Perspective drawing and
plan of San Salvatore –
San Benedetto at Leno.
Plan by Andrea Breda.



and in the atrium of San Felice at Pavia present relevant analogies to those of San Salvatore at Brescia, both in subject (saints standing in flowering fields, and characteristic flowers with winding stems and red blooms) and in colour (yellow, red, and brown).

San Salvatore at Sirmione is also very similar, in plan and structure, to San Giorgio di Montichiari, a church that, according to a fourteenth-century written source, was probably a dependency of the monastery of Leno, which was

founded by King Desiderius in these same years (756–58). Lastly, the church of San Salvatore – San Benedetto at Leno, excavated by Andrea Breda between 2002 and 2004,³⁸ is very similar to San Salvatore at Brescia. It has a single nave with three apses, and outer walls decorated with blind arcades; only the crypt dates from a later transformation in the eleventh century (Figure 14.5).

From such evidence, I think we may conclude that the royal family had highly skilled craftsmen at its disposal who probably worked first for the Lombard king Aistulf, on the church of Santa Maria in Valle at Cividale, and then subsequently for Desiderius and his wife, Queen Ansa, at Brescia, Leno, Pavia, and Sirmione.

The Origins of the Skilled Workers Involved in Church Construction in the Mid-Eighth Century

The church of Santa Maria alle Cacce, at Pavia, constructed during the first half of the eighth century, shows evidence of the early formation of the skilled craftsmen whose activity can be traced later, during the reign of Desiderius. The foundation of this suburban church, close to the *porta palacense*, has been ascribed to a daughter of King Ragimbert (700) or Ratchis (744). A number of features from the original structure (radically modified from the seventeenth century on) have been identified:³⁹

1. A crypt with three apses (two of them visible, the third discovered during excavation in 1979).⁴⁰
2. Some elements of the northern wall (one window still visible and two others documented in photographs of 1934).
3. The lower part of two pilasters over a plinth in the southern wall.
4. A reused column with its capital and two arcades over brick pilasters, visible in the photographs of 1934. They probably belonged to the northern nave colonnade.

These elements, albeit fragmentary, indicate a church with a nave and aisles divided by columns and terminating in three apses, similar to the churches previously described, at Brescia and Leno, and typical of the Desiderian monaster-

³⁸ Breda, 'Leno: monastero e territorio'.

³⁹ Vicini, 'La civiltà artistica'.

⁴⁰ Blake, 'S. Maria delle Cacce: lo scavo archeologico del 1979'.

ies. The building is constructed with Roman bricks and had a corridor crypt, which was accessed from the aisles by stairs, was vaulted, and had relic-niches in its western wall. This kind of crypt, as we have seen, already takes the characteristic form found in the later crypts of San Felice/San Salvatore at Pavia, San Salvatore at Sirmione, and San Giorgio at Montichiari.

Churches, Power, and Economic Resources in the Lombard Kingdom

This close examination of San Salvatore at Brescia in the context of church architecture in northern Italy at the end of the Lombard kingdom admits of two interpretations. The first is of a political-ideological nature and accords well with the historical background described in the introduction. The second is economic and is discussed below.

Confrontations among major powers in the decades around the turn of the eighth century closely concerned the Church and religious issues. There was a sincere engagement with Christian principles on the part of some of the major players (one has only to think of King Ratchis's retirement to the monastery of Monte Cassino). In this context, we should recall a well-known passage in which Paul the Deacon describes the inscription which King Liutprand set up in the church of Sant'Anastasia, at Corteolona. The King wanted to build a thermal bath complex in his palace at Corteolona, some kilometres away from Pavia. For this purpose he recovered some columns from Rome, but after visiting the tomb of St Anastasios he changed his mind and used them for the construction of a church devoted to this saint.⁴¹

The role played by religious devotion was clearly perceived by the elite of the time as central to political life. In a period of extreme weakness of the kingdom after the defeat of Aistulf by Pippin in 756, Desiderius was nominated king, thanks to the support of the Pope and the Franks. In return, he promised the Pope the restitution of some Byzantine cities that King Liutprand had conquered thirty years before, to which the foundation of the monasteries of San Benedetto at Leno (758) and San Salvatore at Brescia (maybe 753 but refounded in 759) can be ascribed. On first coming to power, Desiderius and the family of his wife, Ansa, invested their full prestige in the construction of the monasteries and of their representative churches. The audience for this was not the citizenry of Brescia, but their political peers, the leading powers of the day.

⁴¹ MGH, *Poetae latini aevi Carolini*, I, 24–26.

The second interpretation of the architecture and construction of the church of San Salvatore at Brescia is an economic one. As in many other evergetic enterprises of the time, economics played a major role in the eighth century, in Lombardic Italy as in the Frankish kingdoms elsewhere.⁴²

The church of San Salvatore belongs to a monastic urban complex comprising other buildings of the same architectonic standard, albeit not identical in design. The facade of the south-west building is still preserved and gives us a general idea of its architectural design. A thermal facility, established when the complex was still being built, depended on the construction, in 761, of an aqueduct channeling water from an old Roman watercourse and extending to the west of the town to feed water mills owned by the monastery. This property consisted of a vast area of urban pasture (identified in geoarchaeological analysis of the dark layers), which later would be leased out by the nuns of the convent in the twelfth century. Through an agreement with the city authorities, the monastery donated land for a civic square, in return for which it obtained the rights to develop new buildings in the surrounding area. According to the surviving documents, from the earliest of 759 to the late ninth-century polyptych, the monastery of San Salvatore was a business complex made up of farms,⁴³ spread over many regions of Italy, employing over four thousand servants, and of *curtes* (lordly estates) producing iron (in the Camonica Valley), fabrics, and carved stone and providing pork, fish, and also wine, oil, and cereals (as is described in the Polyptic⁴⁴).

It is therefore apparent that our churches are not only the outcome of political-ideological agendas and decisions. They are also the result of an economic development which made resources available and ensured the possibility of the requisite organization, advanced skills of construction, and fine craftsmanship: the opening up and operation of limestone and marble quarries (for carved items, for some capitals, and for at least two newly cut columns in the San Salvatore Church in Brescia); kiln construction for the manufacturing of bricks (at least for the decorated terracotta tiles and friezes), glass (for the bulbs of the stucco flowers), metal items (including the iron cramps used both for securing stuccoes and in woodworking), and lime; the employment of masons capable of undertaking major works; and craftsmen for wall paintings and stuccoes.

⁴² Lebecq, 'The Role of the Monasteries in the Systems of Production'.

⁴³ On the economic role of early medieval churches as parts of agrarian complex, see Juan Antonio Quirós and Igor Santos's paper in this volume.

⁴⁴ Pasquali, 'San Giulia di Brescia'; Pasquali, 'La distribuzione geografica delle cappelle'.

Such a complex economic scenario, built on the relationships existing inside the kingdom, between dependent towns and territories on a local and a regional scale, does not appear to be the result of continuity or the rekindling of international trade. The interpretation I favour, based on an analysis of the investments made in churches, posits a development which occurred mainly inside the kingdom, made possible through the reorganization of agricultural estates. These moved from a late antique system centred on *villae* (founded in some areas where an intensive agriculture was possible for oil, vine, or cereals) to a new system involving an integrated economy based on agricultural crops, rearing-fosterage, and the exploitation of natural resources, which was introduced between the seventh and eighth centuries. The monasteries were the main protagonists of this development in northern Italy, not only those founded by Desiderius but also San Colombano di Bobbio (founded by the Irish saint in 612) or San Silvestro di Nonantola, established in 752 by Anselmo, duke of Friuli. Urban and rural monasteries acted as collection centres of the incomings from their properties, favouring the exchange of goods and increasing economic development.

In this system, a major role was also played by the exploitation of sloping alpine pastures and terraces⁴⁵ in a period of warmer temperatures documented at the end of the seventh and the eighth centuries.⁴⁶ For the same period, a related development in mining activity is known to have taken place in the region around Brescia⁴⁷ and in Tuscany. At the same time, a concentration of wealth at the top of society is suggested by the introduction of a new gold coinage that would replace the existing bronze coinage, at the end of the seventh century.⁴⁸ This economic development also resulted in an increase in regionally based trade. From this economic-productive system were derived the resources and the complex knowledge and skills needed to construct these elite buildings.

In conquering Lombard Italy, the Carolingians engaged with and exploited this advanced economic production system: they had little interest in breaking it up or destroying it. At first they simply controlled it; later they devel-

⁴⁵ Brogiolo, 'Paesaggi, insediamenti e architetture tra età romana e XIII secolo'. Similar trends of agrarian intensification during the same period are detected, for example, in the case of Galicia (see José Carlos Sánchez-Pardo's essay in this volume).

⁴⁶ Delogu, 'L'ambiente altomedievale come tema storiografico'.

⁴⁷ Cucini and Tizzoni, 'Un forno da ferro longobardo nelle Alpi italiane', pp. 8–9; Cucini and Tizzoni, *La Miniera Perduta*.

⁴⁸ Saccocci, 'Tra antichità e medioevo'.

oped it by placing officers they could trust into key positions: earls, bishops, and abbots. They also exploited existing local expertise and skills for their new foundations in the newly conquered territory. An early instance of this is the monastery at Müstair (Switzerland), where the churches have been dated to the 770s and 780s, according to the latest dendrochronological analyses.⁴⁹ This is a chronological distance from Cividale and Brescia, which makes good sense in terms of differences in architecture and painted decoration. From Italy, Charlemagne did not merely retrieve antique architectural *spolia*, like the material from Ravenna which was re-employed in his palace in Aachen, but also technical know-how, ideas, and craftsmen. The Lombard heritage was certainly not the only cultural resource available to the Carolingians. Other traditions were sought out and drawn on, from far and wide. So, Santa Maria *foris portas* in Castelseprio — should new ¹⁴C and termoluminescence analysis support a date in the early ninth century — would appear to have been constructed in this period and adorned with paintings by artists working in a fairly pure eastern Byzantine idiom.

⁴⁹ Goll, Exner, and Hirsch, *Müstair*.

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ON THE ORIGINS OF THE GREAT CAROLINGIAN PLACE OF POWER: RECENT EXCAVATIONS AT AACHEN CATHEDRAL

Andreas Schaub and Tanja Kohlberger-Schaub*

Aachen between the Late Roman and Early Medieval Periods

The Roman settlement of Aachen (Map 15.1) was probably founded as *Aquae Granni* under the emperor Augustus (27 BC – AD 14), and developed around sulphurous hot springs over an area of 20–30 hectares. It was the location of the palace of Charlemagne (c. 742–814; emperor of the Romans from 800) and the extant church of St Mary. Hitherto, little of the Roman city has been uncovered beyond an accidental fire dating to the second century and traces of a late third-century attack of Germanic tribes. There are no hints of a final destruction at the end of the Roman period in the fourth or fifth century. Between 2007 and 2011, archaeological excavations by the City Archaeologists of Aachen have begun to address the degree of settlement continuity here between the Roman and Carolingian periods, and the date of construction of the church. This provides vital context to the construction of this most famous and influential of early medieval lordly churches.

The question of whether Aachen was continuously settled between the late Roman and early medieval periods has often been posed, but usually answered

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Map 15.1.
Situation map of
Aachen. Map by José
Carlos Sánchez-Pardo
using Demis WMS
World Map.

negatively.¹ This discussion has been revived by the recent excavations, which will be briefly summarized here.²

Finds of the late Roman period indicate that the settlement was still flourishing in the late fourth to early fifth century, with few signs of economic decline (Figure 15.1). The thermal baths, the mainspring of the local economy, were certainly still in use, although the extent of this activity remains unclear. A recently discovered defensive ditch which dates from this period, located between the church and the town hall (Map 15.2), has provided new evidence for the importance of the urban settlement at this time. Judging from its position, it is probable that it formed part of a defensive ring around the present

¹ Cüppers, 'Beiträge zur Geschichte', p. 14; Keller, *Archäologische Forschungen in Aachen*, p. 47; Koch, *Führer zur römischen Abteilung*, p. 19; Mayer, 'Beiträge zur römischen', p. 46; Strauch, 'Römische Fundstellen in Aachen', p. 37. For a rare exception, see Plum, *Die merowingerzeitliche Besiedlung*, pp. 93, 100–102, 171.

² Schaub, 'Gedanken zur Siedlungskontinuität', p. 161; Schaub and others, 'Kelten, Römer', pp. 405–07; Müller and others, *Die Aachener Marienkirche*; Müller and others, 'Pfalz und vicus Aachen in karolingischer Zeit'.



Figure 15.1.
Late Roman finds in
Aachen. Figure by
Andreas Schaub.

Markt, the highest point in the city centre. Late Roman crockery provides the main dating evidence; a piece of so-called *sigillée chrétienne* dates from the first third of the fifth century.³ The contents of the ditch allow us to define the earliest date at which the defensive ring was abandoned, *c.* AD 410–30, although it remains unknown as to when it was constructed. Complete abandonment of the settlement within this defensive ring seems improbable, since there is good evidence for extensive continued settlement beyond its limits:

- The later city centre, within the first city walls of the late twelfth century, is nearly identical with the Roman settlement area, suggesting strong continuity.
- Several modern streets north and south of the palace follow more or less precisely the course of their Roman predecessors.

³ Our thanks to Dr Sebastian Ristow (Cologne) for this identification.

- Remains of Roman architecture have been preserved in fragmentary form as part of medieval buildings.
- Recent excavations east of the Carolingian palace (the present town hall) show that a late Roman wall existed until at least the thirteenth century, when it was dismantled to build a new street ('Krämerstraße').

Further evidence for continuity is provided by the name 'Aachen'. It is relatively certain that the names attested in the Carolingian period since AD 765 — *Aquis villa* or *Aquisgrani*⁴ — are directly derived from the Roman name *Aquae Granni*.⁵ Roman settlements with thermal springs usually were named '*Aquae*', for example *Aquae sulis*/Bath (England), *Aquae sextiae*/Aix-en-Provence (France), or *Aquae mattiacorum*/Wiesbaden (Germany). The second element of these names specifies the place itself, in this case Grannus, a Celtic god of health and water.

Written sources become more frequent during the Carolingian period; the New Year's Day visit of Pippin the Younger, king of the Franks 752–68, at the beginning of 766 is the first reliable evidence for Aachen being visited by a Carolingian ruler. The fact that he celebrated Christmas and Easter, the two most important dates in the Christian calendar, in Aachen has reasonably been interpreted as evidence for the existence of a church and appropriate secular buildings.⁶ This can furthermore be interpreted as indicating that the road network, and even perhaps the infrastructure necessary to provide water and store larger amounts of food, were already present.

Predating the site of the church is a cemetery in use in the late seventh and early eighth centuries. Excavations since 1910 have uncovered at least four skeletons, a wooden coffin, a stone sarcophagus, and fragments of four tombstones. Whatever may have remained of this cemetery played no role in the planning of the church in the late eighth century, as its foundations were laid without taking any account of the graves. Other early finds from the site of the church include two Ostrogothic bronze coins from the first half of the sixth century, one minted in Ravenna under Witichis in 536 to 540, the other under Totila during the years 541 to 552, in *Ticinum*.⁷ Unusually enough, both coins are

⁴ *Annales regni Francorum*, p. 22.

⁵ Galsterer, 'Das römische Aachen', p. 21.

⁶ Plum, *Die merowingerzeitliche Besiedlung*, p. 101.

⁷ Komnick, *Die Fundmünzen der römischen Zeit*, p. 49. The name of the king on the coin is the traditional 'Baduila'.



Map 15.2. Reconstructed city-map of Roman Aachen. Map by Andreas Schaub.

small denominations, which were most probably brought to Aachen by their owners and are highly unlikely to have been used in trade. The two coins thus fall exactly in the period of the interventions in the north Italian Ostrogothic Empire, which were initiated by the Merovingian king Theudebert I in 536.⁸

⁸ Jarnut, 'Die Franken und Italien, in Wiczorek', p. 320.

It is tempting to speculate that soldiers from Aachen formed part of the Frankish army and that they brought the Ostrogothic money with them on their return to Aachen.

Other finds of the Merovingian period from the city centre,⁹ the Markt,¹⁰ and the Elisengarten,¹¹ mainly consisting of pottery, provide further evidence for settlement activity, since they were not found in connection with graves.¹² Future discoveries may obviously alter the overall picture, but the existing early Merovingian material seems to be restricted to the area between the Markt, the cathedral, and the Elisengarten. The evidence for continuous settlement in the city centre during the Roman and early medieval periods therefore seems secure. The previous lack of sixth- to eighth-century finds here was the result not of their absence, but of the failure to document what was already present in the archives, as the recent review of this material has shown.

The settlement area (and presumably the population) of Aachen seems to have shrunk during the late fifth century. There are certainly far fewer finds from this period in the city centre compared to the later Merovingian period. Despite the still low number of finds, the impression from the later Merovingian period is that the settlement area began to extend towards the north and west. The nature of this settlement — perhaps a village, a *vicus*, or a group of estates with farm buildings — remains unclear. Remains of buildings from this period, whether in Aachen or elsewhere in Germany, are almost unknown. In Aachen itself the only candidates are a potential predecessor of the cathedral (see below), some remains — including a ditch — from the city centre Domkloster square,¹³ and some pottery and postholes from the Elisengarten. It is nevertheless conceivable that some Roman stone buildings (or at least their foundations) may have survived and been used during this period: parts of several medieval buildings in the city centre are Roman in origin, and walls and floors

⁹ Found in the square known as the Domkloster (Keller, *Archäologische Forschungen in Aachen*, p. 132, find 703/151). The excavation was carried out by Archäologie Consulting Aachen. The finds material has been recovered (after being untraceable for a considerable while) and is now in the possession of the Aachen city archaeologists. The finds have not yet been systematically documented, but initial inspection has revealed at least two sherds of a biconical pot.

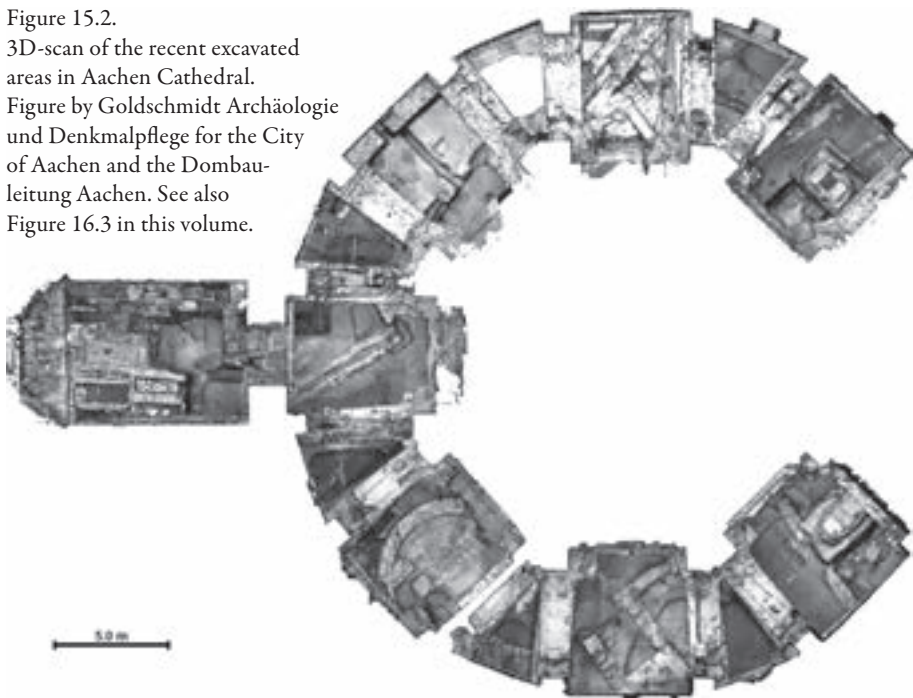
¹⁰ Strauch, 'Römische Fundstellen in Aachen', p. 93, find 24.

¹¹ The excavations were carried out by the company Goldschmidt Archäologie und Denkmalpflege (Düren) under the supervision of Gary White, M.A.

¹² Schaub, 'Gedanken zur Siedlungskontinuität', p. 169, fig. 9.

¹³ Found in 1975: Keller, *Archäologische Forschungen in Aachen*, p. 132, find 703/151.

Figure 15.2.
3D-scan of the recent excavated
areas in Aachen Cathedral.
Figure by Goldschmidt Archäologie
und Denkmalpflege for the City
of Aachen and the Dombau-
leitung Aachen. See also
Figure 16.3 in this volume.



have been found under the Carolingian church dating to after the Roman bath complex had fallen into disuse.¹⁴ The Roman street layout, which is still preserved in part today, must have continued to play an important role. Also worth mentioning in this context are four tombstones found in the vicinity of the cathedral (see below) that indicate that parts of the local population continued to exhibit a high degree of Romanization. It is against this background that the results of the latest excavations in the cathedral should be seen.

The Archaeology of the Carolingian Church

The excavations by the Aachen city archaeologists in the interior of the cathedral between March 2007 and December 2011 were the first major excavations for nearly a hundred years.¹⁵ They took place within the framework of extensive

¹⁴ One section of the Roman walls discovered in the Elisengarten was first dismantled in the eleventh or twelfth century.

¹⁵ Schaub and Kohlberger-Schaub, 'Archäologische Untersuchungen im Aachener Dom, Ein Arbeitsbericht', pp. 15–17; Kohlberger-Schaub and Schaub, 'Archäologische Untersuch-

restoration work in the central octagon, the surrounding gallery, and the porch (Figures 15.2 and 16.3). These parts of the church had already been investigated by Erich Schmidt-Wöpke in 1910/11 as part of a large-scale excavation programme in and around the church and palace, before being refilled with the material from the excavations. The restoration work offered the archaeologists their only chance to carry out a survey using modern methods while checking the reliability of the previous results. An almost complete stone-by-stone survey of the cathedral foundations was undertaken, and stone and mortar samples taken for further analysis.

The Site before the Carolingians

During previous excavations parts of the so-called 'Münsterthermen' (cathedral baths) had been found in the southern bays of the church, while in the northern bays Roman outbuildings had come to light.¹⁶ Extensive remains of the baths, dating from the second to the fifth centuries AD, were again exposed, and earlier structures of the first century AD were discovered.

Very few contexts could be dated securely to the period between the late fifth and the mid-eighth centuries, but on the basis of the finds certain assumptions seem permissible. Human bone found in the excavation fill in almost all the bays of the cathedral had been previously documented in the diary entries from the 1910/11 excavations. It is highly likely that these bones come from a small cemetery, since three almost perfectly preserved graves from the period between Roman and Carolingian times were discovered in the cathedral's central octagon in 1910. As far as one can judge, the contents of several graves which were disturbed during the construction of the church during the eighth century then became part of the backfill in the bays. No grave goods are recorded in the diary entries relating to the graves in the octagon, although a sketch exists in one of the notebooks of a complete silver earring datable to the late seventh or early eighth century from the north-east bay. In the course of the recent excavations a fragment of an almost identical earring was unearthed in

ungen im Aachener Dom, Ein Arbeitsbericht 2009/2010', p. 1. The project was carried out and received generous support from several quarters, most notably from the church Works Department, the regional heritage and archaeological authorities (Landschaftsverband Rheinland, Amt für Bodendenkmalpflege), students from the local university (RWTH Aachen), and volunteers from the local archaeological society (Aachener Arbeitskreis für Archäologie).

¹⁶ Cüppers, 'Beiträge zur Geschichte', pp. 1–4; Schaub and others, 'Kelten, Römer, Merowinger', p. 332.



Figure 15.3.
Seventh-/eighth-century earrings found
in Aachen Cathedral in 1910 and 2007.
Drawing by Heinrich Savelsberg,
photograph by Andreas Schaub.

the north bay, where part of the backfill from the 1910 excavations in the north-east bay was now to be found (Figure 15.3). We can assume that the earrings originally belonged to a Merovingian lady buried in the immediate vicinity. A bronze brooch found during the recent excavations can be dated to the same period (*c.* AD 640/50–710) and is presumably also from a grave. A treetrunk coffin, dated dendrochronologically to the year AD 734±8,¹⁷ was found in 1928 in the Domhof, the area of the cathedral atrium.¹⁸

The tombstones mentioned above as being found in the vicinity of the cathedral in the late nineteenth century were originally dated to the late Roman period.¹⁹ In the course of a later reassessment these dates have been revised, and an early medieval date now seems more probable.²⁰ A fragment of a fourth tombstone has now been discovered, walled into the external face of the wall of the south-east bay. The form of the lettering points to a date between the

¹⁷ Hollstein, *Mitteleuropäische Eichenringchronologie*, p. 45.

¹⁸ Keller, *Archäologische Forschungen in Aachen*, p. 119, find 703/120.

¹⁹ Mayer, 'Beiträge zur römischen', p. 47; Strauch, 'Römische Fundstellen in Aachen', p. 36.

²⁰ Keller, *Archäologische Forschungen in Aachen*, p. 47; a report containing these new results is currently in preparation.



Figure 15.4. Late Roman or early medieval wall in the *frigidarium* of the thermal bath underneath the south-west part of the surrounding gallery (hexadecagon) of the cathedral. Photograph by Andreas Schaub.

second half of the sixth and the seventh century,²¹ and a symmetrical cross next to the word *Tito(lum)* presumably indicates that this was a Christian burial.

Pottery sherds of the late fifth and sixth centuries have been found during the initial analysis of the excavations.²² Particularly noteworthy are the fragments of a sixth-century biconical clay pot, a so-called *Knickwandtopf*. Some of the Merovingian pottery shows traces of soot, indicating that the vessels had been used for cooking. These finds increase the probability that there was an early medieval settlement nearby, whose remains were possibly destroyed in the course of the construction of the Carolingian church and palace buildings.

²¹ Nikitsch, 'Einleitung und Auswertung des Inschriftenbestandes DI 60/1'.

²² Our thanks to Wolfram Giertz (Aachen-Walheim) for his help in assessing the medieval pottery.

The Predecessor of the Carolingian Church

Meagre wall fragments under the Carolingian church provide as yet our only architectural evidence for settlement in the Merovingian and early Carolingian periods. These fragments must be older than the stratigraphically later structures of the palatine church, and thus earlier than 793, the current latest date for the commencement of the work on the church (see below).²³ Heinz Cüppers's interpretation of the earlier walls as the remains of an early Christian church has been the subject of a later commentary by Ruth Maria Plum.²⁴ The reconstructed building possessed an apse to the north-east with remains of an altar to the south-west of the apse.²⁵ More recently, foundations for a wall were discovered in the area of the abandoned *frigidarium* (Figure 15.4), which were similarly older than the Carolingian contexts, but which presumably did not belong to the putative early church.

The Carolingian Church: New Findings

In the recent excavations, the massive foundations of the Carolingian church were again unearthed beneath and between the columns of the octagon and the hexadecagon (the external wall of the surrounding gallery) (Figure 15.5).

This obviously came as no surprise, but we were nonetheless able to identify several important architectural details which had either previously not been recorded, or whose significance had not been recognized. Analysis of the fragmentary remains of the different floor levels on the ground floor has provided us with a much more certain basis for further work. A final interpretation of this material is forthcoming, but several important observations can be summarized as follows:

- The foundation walls of the church were constructed in two phases. The lower part of the foundations was built within foundation trenches, whose upper edges approximately coincided with the sloping floor levels of the

²³ Schmidt and others, 'Die Hölzer aus dem karolingischen', p. 228.

²⁴ Cüppers, 'Beiträge zur Geschichte', pp. 32–34; Plum, *Die merowingerzeitliche Besiedlung*, p. 184.

²⁵ The complicated relationship of the different contexts has been thoroughly interpreted by Felix Kreuzsch (Über *Pfalzkapelle*, pp. 38–39). The authors' excavation did not encompass this putative early church: Sebastian Ristow of the University of Cologne is presently studying the excavation archive for the palace and church area.



Figure 15.5. Carolingian foundation walls in the northern part of the surrounding gallery (hexadecagon) of the cathedral, looking towards the octagon. Photograph by Andreas Schaub.

Roman period. These lay between 0.5 and 3.0 m below the level of the later church floor. The upper part of the foundations was originally constructed as a freestanding wall, which was incorporated into the foundations after the filling of the intervening spaces and the first laying of the cathedral floor.

- The walls in the foundation trenches can be easily distinguished from the later walls, as the mortar between the successive stone layers was squeezed out at the sides and forms clearly recognizable layers on the outside face of the walls (Figure 15.6). The stones themselves are a heterogeneous mixture, which presumably came from Roman stone buildings: besides greywacke, lime marl, and bluestone (another variety of limestone) one occasionally finds sandstone from Herzogenrath (near Aachen) and Roman brick rubble. Like Roman *opus signinum*, the lime mortar was tempered with a substantial amount of finely crushed rubble from Roman bricks. The addition of the rubble increases the resistance of the mortar to damp, a sensible measure considering the high water content of the surrounding soil. An irregular cement bulge marks the transition from the lower to the upper foundations; this bulge also marks the building horizon at the start of the construction of the church. The upper foundations consist almost entirely of coursed greywacke masonry, with the stones clearly originating from the same quarry.



Figure 15.6. Detail of the foundation trenches in the north-east part of the surrounding gallery (hexadecagon) of the cathedral. Photograph by Andreas Schaub.

- Particularly worth noting is a thin clay plaster, which was recorded on the surface of the walls in the north-western bays. Like the brick rubble temper, this was presumably intended to counteract the foreseeable problems with rising damp in this part of the cathedral.
- The two uppermost layers of the foundations between the columns of the octagon consist of (larger?) cut stones, some of which exhibit decorative elements. These Roman *spolia* are for the most part made of bluestone, with surfaces that have been dressed with different techniques and differing degrees of care. Other limestones and (occasionally) sandstone were also used. An ornamental limestone architrave with three fascias (as can be seen on the left of Figure 15.5) and a bluestone base moulding are particularly remarkable. The Roman *spolia* were presumably taken from buildings in Aachen. Many of the stones show traces of post-Roman dressing, which was clearly carried out on the building site; countless fragments from the stones were found during the excavations. The mortar between the cut stones contains far more brick rubble than the other parts of the walls.
- At almost all the corners of the foundation walls there was evidence for small wooden beams (both horizontal and vertical), either in the form of impressions in the mortar or holes in and/or on ledges in the walls. The



Figure 15.7. Scratched lines on the surface of the foundation stones of a pillar in the north-western part of the octagon. Photograph by Andreas Schaub.

diameter of the round horizontal beams was rarely more than 2.5 cm; the sides of the approximately square vertical posts were 5–6.5 cm long. The beams and posts are not substantial enough to have formed part of the scaffolding for the building, and the positioning of the posts at the corners of the bays suggest that they were part of a site grid used to align the foundations accurately. The lines scratched on the surface of the foundation stones of several pillars in the octagon and one pillar in the hexadecagon must have served the same purpose (Figure 15.7), although it remains uncertain why such traces were not found under all the pillars.

- In a few contexts remains of lime mortar flooring, containing a large amount of finely crushed brick, had been preserved between the top courses of the octagon foundations and the flagstones of the modern paved floor, which was laid in 1913. Small fragments of the original slabs which had been laid in the lime mortar were also found occasionally. The original slabs were mostly bluestone, but fragments of sandstone and white marble were also identified.



Figure 15.8.
Oak beam found in 2009
underneath the north-
eastern pillar of the octagon.
Photograph by Andreas Schaub.

The Chronology of the Construction of the Carolingian Church

Several aspects of the recent excavations have allowed us to date the construction of the palatine church far more accurately than has previously been possible.

Oak Pilings from the Foundations

The eastern column of the octagon in the north bay was constructed on a base of oak pilings, previously excavated in 1911. The subsoil, which is still damp today, occasioned their use. The oak pilings from the original excavation, which were taken from the side facing the octagon, are no longer extant; the present excavations offered us the opportunity to extract further oak beams for dendrochronological analysis, this time from the side facing the hexadecagon. An oak beam was found in an exploratory trench in the north bay but was too poorly preserved to serve for dendrochronological analysis. A further exploratory trench in the north-east bay produced two well-preserved oak beams (Figure 15.8).²⁶ One of them could be dated exactly on the basis of fifty-seven

²⁶ Analysis of these beams was undertaken by Dr Thomas Frank of the Labor für Dendrochronologie der Universität zu Köln.

tree rings, of which the outermost ring is from AD 781. Once the missing sapwood and further comparative material had been taken into account, a final date for the felling of 798 ± 5 was reached, that is, between AD 793 and 803.

A Coin of Charlemagne's Reign

The recent excavations produced the first coin from Charlemagne's reign found in Aachen. Even more significantly, the coin was found within the Carolingian church and may contribute to the clarification of the earliest construction phases. The coin was a silver denarius in excellent condition, minted in *Metullo* (present-day Melle, France) after the Carolingian coinage reform of the year 794, and was found in the backfill from the 1910 excavations in the north-east bay. The bay contains the remains of the crypt of St Corona, built by Otto III c. AD 1000. The original context of the coin can be reconstructed with the help of the surviving excavation diaries. According to the diaries, the backfill above the crypt originally came from the north/north-east bay of the church. Another entry in the diaries indicated that the 'Carolingian concrete' (i.e. the flooring) in this bay was still intact at the beginning of the excavations. Since the coin can hardly have lain on the flooring, it must originate from the earth or rubble beneath the flooring, where it was presumably mislaid in the course of the laying of the foundations. This gives us a reliable terminus post quem for the laying of the original church floor.

Evidence of an Earthquake during Construction

Cracks in the walling were visible in several different construction phases of the church foundations. In some places there were cracks in the hard stone greywacke (and not, as might have been expected, in the softer mortar joints). Further cracks, which were filled with a dark brown, clayey sediment, were observed in the loess subsoil. These cracks have been interpreted as the traces of an earthquake with an intensity of at least 5.5 on the Richter scale.²⁷

Observations in the north-west bay of the cathedral show that this earthquake must have occurred during the construction of the church. Under the stairs to the Church of St Nicholas original layers had been preserved, as these

²⁷ The cracks were investigated by scientists from the RWTH Aachen University, namely the Institute of Neotectonics and Natural Hazards (Institut für Neotektonik und Georisiken; Prof. Dr Klaus Reicherter, Dr Christoph Grützner) and the Department of Engineering Geology and Hydrogeology (Institut für Ingenieursgeologie und Hydrogeologie; Dr Tomas Fernandez-Steeger).

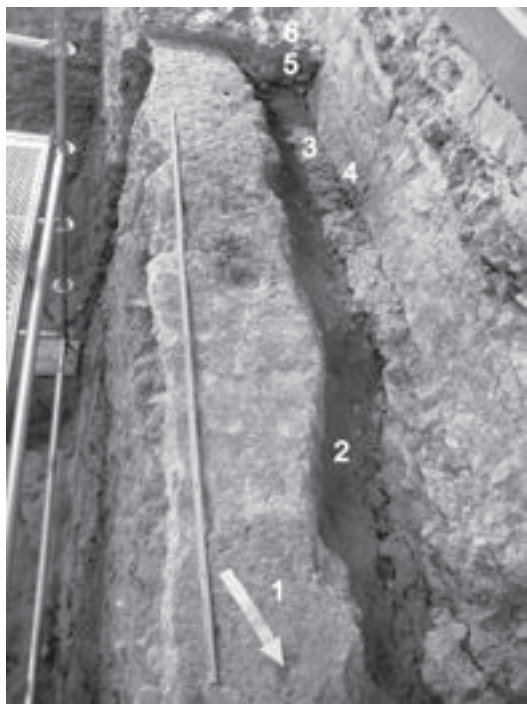


Figure 15.9.
Archaeological remains of an early medieval earthquake, documented in the north-west part of the surrounding gallery (hexadecagon) of the cathedral. Photograph by Andreas Schaub.

stairs had remained in place in 1910. Among the layers above the Carolingian backfill mentioned above was a mortar floor (Figure 15.9, location 1) which, given its level, could not have served as permanent flooring. It must have been used temporarily, presumably either to offer a more stable basis for further construction or for use as flooring prior to the final completion of the church. This temporary flooring was massively disturbed by the earthquake; on the three sides which were still preserved, the floor was no longer contiguous with the walls, and small rills had developed between the walls and the flooring (Figure 15.9, location 2). These rills had subsequently been filled with a mixture of mortar and gravel (Figure 15.9, location 3). This mixture was also found above one of the cracks (Figure 15.9, location 4), so that the crack must be older. The gravel and mortar layer lay below a layer of pure clay (Figure 15.9, location 5) which formed the base for the final floor of the church (Figure 15.9, location 6).

Two earthquakes are recorded for the relevant period. The *Annales Regni Francorum* contain the following reference to the first earthquake, in the year 803: 'in this winter there was an earthquake around the palace and the neighbouring area, which caused some deaths' (literally 'and a dying followed') ('hac hieme circa ipsum palatium et finitimas regiones terrae motus factus et mor-

talitas subsecuta est'). A later earthquake of 829, which also involved the palace and is mentioned in the *Reichsannalen*, cannot be seen as the cause of the cracks. A recent dendrochronological probe²⁸ from a wooden ring beam from the dome of the octagon has been dated to 803±10, so that the construction of the church must have been finished during Charlemagne's reign (768–814).

A Revised Chronology for Charlemagne's Church

In the light of the new finds we can draw the following conclusions. The dendrochronological date for the oak pilings shows that the construction of the foundation walls was begun in 793 at the earliest. From a remark made by Alcuin in a letter written to Charlemagne in 798 we learn that the columns in the upper storey were erected in this year. The speed of construction involved is astounding, but the coin find points in the same direction. The earliest possible date for the provisional church floor is 794; if we accept the connection with the earthquake of 803, the final flooring must have been completed after this date. Assuming that the flooring was first completed towards the end of construction, it cannot have been laid long after 803. The new dendrochronological dates for the wooden ring beam from the dome of the octagon corroborate this surprisingly early date.

Aachen as a Place of Power in the Early Middle Ages

The results from the recent excavations await final publication, but they are significant for our interpretation of Carolingian Aachen. The surprisingly late date for the start of the church's construction, at least twenty-five years after Charlemagne became king, implies both the presence of an earlier Carolingian church on the site and that Aachen had already been invested with considerable royal power before the decision was made to build the present church.²⁹ We do not know when Aachen became a royal manor, but as already mentioned above, the fact that Pippin celebrated Christmas and Easter in Aachen in 765/66 (and the length of his stay) indicates that the infrastructure necessary to entertain his extensive entourage both economically and culturally must have been present. Aachen was not founded anew within abandoned Roman ruins, and the thermal springs were not the only reason for the resettlement, as has tradition-

²⁸ Schmidt and others, 'Die Hölzer aus dem karolingischen'.

²⁹ On Aachen as a place of power, see Nelson, 'Aachen as a Place of Power'.

ally been thought.³⁰ The marble which Pope Adrian I is recorded as allowing Charlemagne to take from the palace in Ravenna in the year 786/87, six years earlier than the construction of the church, may therefore have originally been intended for use in other royal buildings such as the putative earlier church or the *aula regia*.

Pippin's original choice of Aachen as a royal manor can be interpreted as a conscious reference to the Roman imperial tradition, anticipating Charlemagne's *renovatio imperii romani*. Among the cities and towns of the Carolingian territories Aachen would certainly have been a suitable choice, with its clearly visible Roman roots and thanks to the absence of powerful rivals such as the archbishops of Cologne, Mainz, and Trier. Tongeren, the main alternative candidate, was considerably larger, but the thermal springs may well have proved the crucial factor behind the decision to make the ancient Roman settlement of *Aquae Granni* a new 'place of power' by building a palace and the presumed earlier church. This contradicts documentary narratives of the *de novo* creation of Aachen by Charlemagne, who adopted an existing place of power and, for at least the first twenty-five years of his reign, curated an existing church. The new evidence for the surprisingly late construction and rapid completion of the present church suggests that it was conceived for a particular purpose, and that a considerable degree of investment and political planning was required for its rapid completion.

Construction of Charlemagne's vast new church appears to have only taken ten years, and it was fit for the new Emperor's aggrandisement within perhaps a year or two of his coronation in Rome on Christmas Day in the year 800. Charlemagne's church has long been interpreted as a statement of *Romanitas* which complemented the Roman origins of Aachen, but its revised chronology enables us more closely than ever before to relate it to the King's imperial ambitions.³¹ The architecture of the new church was radically different from the basilican church plan which had been adopted under the first Christian emperor, Constantine I (306–37), from standard Roman civic architecture, along with many other aspects of dress, imagery, ceremony, and liturgy which

³⁰ Charlemagne's passion for hot springs is reported by Einhard, who attributes the founding of the palace here to this factor: 'Ob hoc etiam Aquisgrani regiam exstruxit' (*Einhardi Vita Karoli Magni*, p. 22).

³¹ See Michael Shapland's chapter in this volume, for ecclesiastical architecture as an extension of royal policy and the influence of Charlemagne's church on subsequent Anglo-Saxon kings.

were also adapted from imperial forms.³² Charlemagne's church was instead modelled on the centrally planned rotunda of San Vitale in Ravenna, built around 527 at what was then the capital of the Western Roman Empire.³³

The iconography of centrally planned churches such as those at Aachen and Ravenna is intimately related to imperial ambition, far more than the standard basilica that we presume Charlemagne's church replaced. The form of San Vitale had been directly copied from imperial chapels across the Roman empire,³⁴ whose distinctive centrally planned form originates with Constantine himself, upon whom Charlemagne sought to model himself. Constantine constructed churches adjacent to his palaces as he embedded Christianity into the empire, such as the 'Golden Octagon' (c. 327) at Antioch, which it is thought would have been centrally planned, octagonal, and domed.³⁵ In turn, the origin of Constantine's Golden Octagon is held to be the great domed, centrally planned, circular or polygonal throne rooms of the Roman emperors stretching back into the pre-Christian period.³⁶ The form is also evident in the octagonal domed imperial mausolea dating to the mid-third century AD onwards, such as that of Theodoric the Great (d. 526) in Ravenna, which lies less than a mile from the church of San Vitale.³⁷ Charlemagne's church at Aachen also serves as his mortuary chapel and became an influential model for high-status churches and mausolea across early medieval Europe.³⁸

³² Doig, *Liturgy and Architecture*, pp. 21–52.

³³ Kleinbauer, 'Charlemagne's Palace Chapel'.

³⁴ Calkins, *Medieval Architecture*, pp. 25–38.

³⁵ Elderkin, *Antioch-on-the-Orontes*, p. 145; Downey, *A History of Antioch in Syria*, pp. 342–60; Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, p. 76; McLynn, 'The Transformation of Imperial Churchgoing in the Fourth Century', pp. 237 and 244.

³⁶ Smith, *Architectural Symbolism*, pp. 139 and 166; Lavin, 'The House of the Lord', pp. 16–21; Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, pp. 77–80.

³⁷ Johnson, *The Roman Imperial Mausoleum*.

³⁸ Gem, 'Towards an Iconography', p. 9; Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, pp. 76–80 and 318–20.

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PALACES, CHURCHES, AND THE PRACTICE OF ANGLO-SAXON KINGSHIP

Michael Shapland*

We know that the Anglo-Saxons built palaces, but we know very little about them and nothing about the chapels with which they must have been supplied.¹

For the kings of Anglo-Saxon England, no less than those on the Continent, palaces were central to the projection of power, authority, and the royal image. This volume considers the use of Christianity by royal and aristocratic powers across early medieval Europe, which as a codified, hierarchical religion held obvious attractions for sovereign rule. Following its gradual adoption in the century after AD 597, Anglo-Saxon kings actively used Christianity as an effective instrument of royal power,² cementing the overlordship of subject kingdoms,³ strengthening political and commercial links with Continental powers,⁴ and appropriating the power and image of Roman authority.⁵ When

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¹ Fernie, 'Saxons, Normans and their Buildings', p. 5.

² Higham, *The Convert Kings*, is a useful summary.

³ Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 173–77; essays in Carver, *The Cross Goes North*.

⁴ For example, Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*.

⁵ Brooks, 'Canterbury, Rome and the Construction of English Identity'; Bell, *The Religious Reuse of Roman Structures*.

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Map 16.1.
Map of England
showing the main
sites mentioned in
the text. Map by
José Carlos Sánchez-
Pardo using Demis
WMS World Map.

ideology has physical form it can be codified and controlled,⁶ and the central physical expression of Anglo-Saxon Christianity was its buildings.

Recent work has re-emphasized the importance of Carolingian palace chapels in unifying a vast and disparate empire and lending legitimacy to its rulers.⁷ The purpose of this chapter is therefore to explore the churches that Anglo-Saxon kings built at their palaces, and explore the concept that these churches, no less than those on the Continent, may have furthered the social power of their kings.⁸

Royal Palaces in Anglo-Saxon England

Despite the importance of palaces to Anglo-Saxon royal practice we know remarkably little about them, and rather less about the churches with which they

⁶ DeMarras and others, 'Ideology, Materialisation and Power Strategies', pp. 15–17.

⁷ McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, pp. 340–45.

⁸ Helms, *Craft and the Kingly Ideal*, esp. pp. 78–79, provides a broad anthropological introduction to this topic.

were associated.⁹ One hundred and ninety-three Anglo-Saxon royal sites are known from documentary sources, of which the locations of 155 have been identified.¹⁰ Anglo-Saxon kingship was inherently itinerant, as the court travelled to gather taxes and food-renders, hold councils, issue charters, mediate upon disputes, and project the king's will across his domain.¹¹ We should therefore conceive of a network of 'royal sites' — commonly monasteries — where arrangements could be made to accommodate sporadic visits by the court.¹² Very few of the non-monastic sites have been excavated, and even fewer appear to have been 'palaces' in the later medieval sense of an ostentatious suite of permanent buildings at which the king habitually resided,¹³ as was the norm in the Carolingian world.¹⁴ From the mid-eighth century onwards, Carolingian and Ottonian rulers established monumental new palaces away from their traditional urban centres of royal itinerancy, so as to 'embed' their kingship in the landscape of their increasingly vast empire:¹⁵ all of these palaces for which good archaeological or documentary evidence survives incorporated churches.¹⁶ In comparison, the evidence for churches at the royal places of Anglo-Saxon England is limited, excepting at a number of royal monasteries, which will be discussed further below.

The Evidence for Churches at Anglo-Saxon Royal Sites

Only two Anglo-Saxon palaces have been excavated and fully published, Yeavinger (Northumbria) and Cheddar (Somerset) (Map 16.1). The Bernician royal centre at Yeavinger is mentioned as such by the eighth-century Northumbrian

⁹ Fernie, 'Saxons, Normans and their Buildings'.

¹⁰ Sawyer, 'The Royal *tun* in Anglo-Saxon England'.

¹¹ Roach, *Kingship and Consent* is a recent comprehensive survey.

¹² Roach, *Kingship and Consent*, pp. 67–68.

¹³ General discussions of Anglo-Saxon royal sites are Campbell, 'Bede's Words for Places'; Campbell, 'Anglo-Saxon Courts'; Sawyer, 'The Royal *tun* in Anglo-Saxon England'; Alcock, *Bede, Eddius and the Forts of the North Britons*; Rahtz, 'Royal Sites'; Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, pp. 262–86. Hamerow, *Rural Settlements and Society in Anglo-Saxon England*, esp. pp. 102–09, reviews excavated evidence for high-status Anglo-Saxon settlements. Untermann, 'Palaces' is a broad summary of Western European royal palaces, and Zotz, 'Kingship and Palaces' provides a rare comparative perspective between England and the Continent.

¹⁴ McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, pp. 157–71.

¹⁵ Innes, 'People, Places and Power', pp. 418–26; McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, pp. 157–71.

¹⁶ Lobbedey, 'Carolingian Royal Palaces' discusses the evidence for Aachen, Ingelheim, Paderborn, Frankfurt, Compiègne, St Denis, and Salerno. See also McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, pp. 157–71.

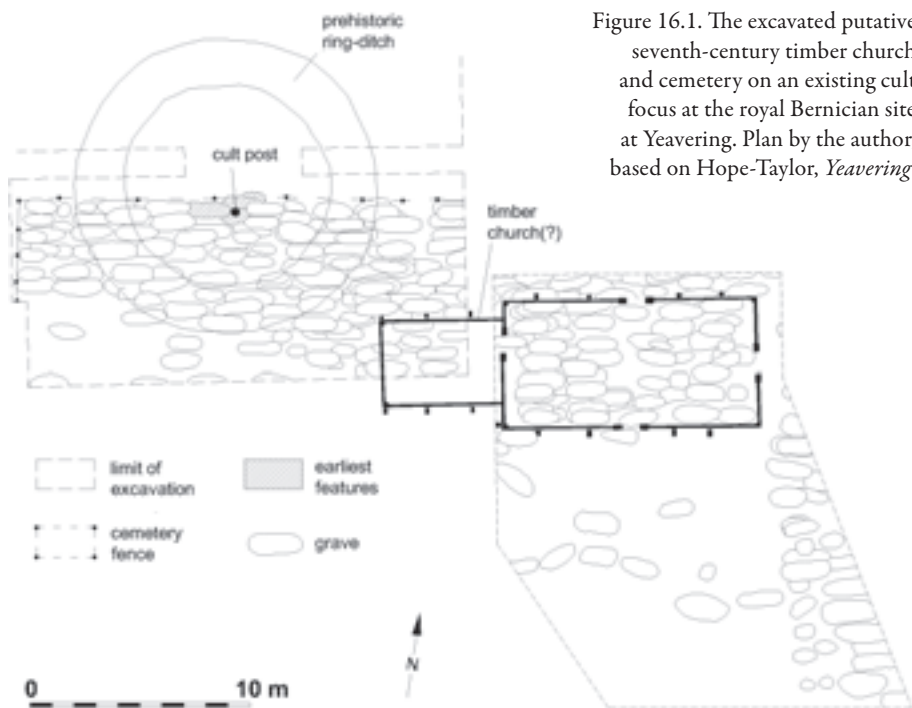


Figure 16.1. The excavated putative seventh-century timber church and cemetery on an existing cult focus at the royal Bernician site at Yeavinger. Plan by the author, based on Hope-Taylor, *Yeavinger*.

historian Bede and was in use during the later sixth and seventh centuries, on the cusp of the royal conversion to Christianity.¹⁷ A substantial earthwork enclosure, interpreted as a corral for tribute cattle, was the earliest feature on the palace site. A series of large timber halls aligned with several cult foci were uncovered, including a theatre, a possible pagan temple, several pillars, and a prehistoric barrow and stone circle. A rectangular timber structure with a western annexe, twelve by six metres in length, was aligned east–west and became the focus of numerous east–west aligned burials (Figure 16.1). This was interpreted as a Christian cemetery, and the rectangular structure as a church.¹⁸ It showed extensive signs of repair, indicating its long-standing use, and is dated to the mid-seventh century on documentary grounds.

Bede also records a church at a second Bernician royal centre, Bamburgh.¹⁹ St Peter's church was founded by King Oswiu of Bernicia (642–70) as a dynas-

¹⁷ Hope-Taylor, *Yeavinger*; Frodsham and O'Brien, *Yeavinger*.

¹⁸ Hope-Taylor, *Yeavinger*, pp. 72–78. Although western chancels are unusual in early medieval Europe they are not unknown, not least at St Peter's in Rome.

¹⁹ Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III, 6 and III, 12.

tic chapel rather than a public church to house relics of his sainted brother, King Oswald (634–42).²⁰ Fieldwork at Bamburgh is ongoing, but the later medieval castle chapel may preserve the location of its predecessor.²¹

The royal site at Cheddar (Somerset) is documented between the tenth and thirteenth centuries.²² Its initial two-storey hall was rebuilt, possibly by King Æthelstan (924–39), and a stone church constructed.²³ The church only measured six by four metres in its first phase and was rubble-built with stucco made to resemble ashlar. It was rebuilt on a larger scale — thirteen metres by eight — in the late tenth/early eleventh centuries, and a chancel added not long after. Adjacent to the palace was an earlier monastery, first recorded in the late ninth century. John Blair has argued that the documented palace was established as a royal hunting-lodge within the existing monastic enclosure during the early tenth century. As it prospered it encroached upon the monastic community, dominating it.²⁴

The palace at Old Windsor (Berkshire) has also been excavated but remains unpublished.²⁵ Located in what is now a field called ‘Kingsbury’, the first phase of occupation included the *ex situ* stones of a possible late seventh-century stone building with glazed windows and a tiled roof, a probable church. It was destroyed by fire in the late ninth/early tenth centuries, and timber buildings constructed on the site. However, the palace is only documented from the 1060s, raising the possibility this was a monastery which, like Cheddar, developed into a royal residence. A twelfth-century church adjacent to the excavated area may be the successor to this suggested early monastery.

A ‘royal palace’ (*regio palatio*) is mentioned at Gloucester in 1051 by a near-contemporary source.²⁶ A late Anglo-Saxon or early Norman ‘royal hall’ (*regia aula*) is documented at Kingsholm, a Roman fort adjacent to the medieval city:²⁷

²⁰ Cambridge, ‘Archaeology and the Cult of St Oswald’, pp. 136–39; Thacker, ‘*Membra Disjecta*’, p. 102.

²¹ Wood, ‘Geophysical Survey at Bamburgh Castle’.

²² Rahtz, *The Saxon and Medieval Palaces at Cheddar*, esp. pp. 193–212.

²³ Blair, ‘Palaces or Minsters?’, pp. 112–15, alternatively dates the first phase of the chapel to the period c. 980–1050.

²⁴ Blair, ‘Palaces or Minsters?’.

²⁵ Only a brief interim report is available: Wilson and Hurst, ‘Medieval Britain in 1957’.

²⁶ Fletcher, ‘Roman and Saxon Dendro Dates’; Hare, ‘Kings, Crowns and Festivals’, p. 57.

²⁷ Hurst and others, ‘Excavations at Gloucester: Third Interim Report’.

a substantial timber hall has been excavated on this site,²⁸ and a palace chapel of St Nicholas, of probable eleventh-century origin, is known from documentary sources.²⁹

To these can be added several high-status settlement sites identified from excavation and aerial photography, all of which have apsidal-ended buildings: Hatton Rock (Warwickshire),³⁰ Cowage Farm (Wiltshire),³¹ and Sprouston (Roxburghshire).³² However, there is no clear documentary evidence that these sites were royal centres. The royal associations of an excavated masonry chapel with painted plaster beneath Colchester castle in Essex are more secure in view of its documented royal status from the mid-eleventh century onwards.³³

Turning to documentary sources, King Æthelred II attested a charter from the church (*oratorium*) at his royal *vill* in Gillingham (Dorset), where he also heard Mass.³⁴ At the royal residence at Pucklechurch (Gloucestershire), the twelfth-century historian William of Malmesbury recounts that King Edmund (939–46) ‘heard mass and hurried from the church to the hall (*ab ecclesia in aulam*)’.³⁵

These few sites comprise the best evidence for churches at Anglo-Saxon royal palaces. Several more tenuous sites are excluded here. The tradition that St Alban’s, Wood Street, in the City of London, was the chapel of King Offa’s palace is now questioned.³⁶ Bede mentions a chapel founded in 627 at the palace of *Campodunum*, in the vicinity of Leeds (Yorkshire),³⁷ and a palace near Bamburgh with a church associated with St Aidan,³⁸ but the location of neither is known.³⁹

²⁸ Hurst, *Excavations at Kingsholm Close*.

²⁹ Hurst and others, ‘Excavations at Gloucester: Third Interim Report’; Hare, ‘Kings, Crowns and Festivals’, pp. 57–58.

³⁰ Hirst and Rahtz, ‘Hatton Rock 1970’.

³¹ Hinchcliffe, ‘An Early Medieval Settlement at Cowage Farm’.

³² Smith, ‘Sprouston, Roxburghshire’.

³³ Drury, ‘Aspects of the Origins and Development of Colchester Castle’, esp. pp. 389–91. My thanks to John Blair and Andrew Reynolds for drawing my attention to these sites.

³⁴ Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, no. 876; Sawyer, ‘The Royal *tun* in Anglo-Saxon England’.

³⁵ *William of Malmesbury: Saints’ Lives*, ed. by Winterbottom and Thomson, pp. 212–15.

³⁶ Milne and Dyson, ‘The Tradition of a Saxon Palace at Cripplegate’; see also Cowie, ‘The Evidence for Royal Sites’, p. 203.

³⁷ Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II, 14.

³⁸ Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III, 17.

³⁹ Cambridge, ‘Archaeology and the Cult of St Oswald’, pp. 136–39, has cautiously identified the latter with the twelfth-century church of St Aidan, Bamburgh. On these churches, see Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, pp. 69–72, who interprets them (and a third, un-

He also mentions the baptism of the East Saxon king Swithelm at the East Anglian royal palace (*vicus regius*) of Rendlesham *c.* AD 661, but there is uncertain evidence for a church building here at this time.⁴⁰ The locations of many royal *vills* have been identified on topographical grounds,⁴¹ but again there is frustratingly little evidence for residential buildings, or that any associated medieval churches were contemporaneous with these sites. A good illustration is Tamworth (Staffordshire), which is documented as the primary royal palace of Mercia between the late eighth and mid-ninth centuries. King Offa (757–96) may have modelled it on his rival Charlemagne's palace at Aachen, but it remains largely uninvestigated,⁴² and the associated church of St Edith — sister of King Æthelstan — was only founded in the tenth century.⁴³

Overall, the evidence for churches at Anglo-Saxon royal residences is surprisingly meagre for five centuries of Anglo-Saxon Christianity, which is in part due to the scarcity of known palace complexes from this period.⁴⁴ Given how central Christianity was to Anglo-Saxon kingship, we have a remarkable paucity of evidence for how this was manifested at royal palaces. As discussed above, the Carolingian concept of the fixed residential 'palace' may not be applicable for much of the Anglo-Saxon period, meaning that we should instead conceive of a network of 'royal sites' at which an itinerant king might stop. Some of these sites may have comprised temporary structures, on which a window on Anglo-Saxon practice may be provided by the twelfth-century *Bolden Book*, which specifies that a great hall and a chapel were to be erected in the forest for the Bishop of Durham when he went hunting.⁴⁵ As in the Carolingian Empire, however, many others of these royal sites would have been monasteries.⁴⁶

named site) as a brief, Italianate stage of episcopal baptismal churches at royal sites, of the type discussed here in Gian Pietro Brogiolo's and Alexandra Chavarría's papers.

⁴⁰ Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica*, III, 22. For the evidence for an Anglo-Saxon palace and church at Rendlesham, see Bruce-Mitford, *Aspects of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology*, pp. 73–113, and Newman, 'The Late Roman and Anglo-Saxon Settlement Patterns in the Sandlings of Suffolk', pp. 36–38.

⁴¹ For example, regional studies in *Anglo-Saxon Towns in Southern England*.

⁴² Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, pp. 274–78.

⁴³ Greenslade and Pugh, *Victoria History of the County of Stafford*, p. 309.

⁴⁴ Fernie, 'Saxons, Normans and their Buildings', p. 5. Archaeological excavation will doubtless add to this small corpus, not least as more documented royal sites are excavated (e.g. Thomas 'Bishopstone and Lyminge'; Thomas and Knox, 'A Window on Christianisation').

⁴⁵ Campbell, 'Anglo-Saxon Courts', p. 158.

⁴⁶ Campbell, 'Anglo-Saxon Courts', p. 164; Innes, 'People, Places and Power', pp. 418–26; Roach, 'Hosting the King'; Zotz, 'Kingship and Palaces'.

Anglo-Saxon Monasteries and Royal Chapels

Anglo-Saxon kings would have incorporated monasteries into their itineraries almost from the conversion of their kingdoms, and from the seventh century onwards the majority of monastic foundations were dependent on royal patronage.⁴⁷ This network of royal monasteries is closely paralleled on the Continent, particularly following a period of influential Anglo-Saxon missions to the Frankish Empire during the first half of the eighth century.⁴⁸

In 1996, John Blair instigated a debate as to how archaeologists characterize Anglo-Saxon monasteries and palaces, particularly when relying upon artefact assemblages, topography, and building types, at excavated sites such as Northampton,⁴⁹ Brandon,⁵⁰ and Flixborough.⁵¹ Blair concluded that 'there is of course a point beyond which the distinction between royal palace and royal minster becomes anachronistic', particularly in the later Anglo-Saxon period when many hitherto impermanent and shifting royal residences appear to have crystallized around stable, pre-existing monasteries:⁵²

Minsters had been imbued with secular culture from the outset; but whereas the secular great of the late seventh century had interacted with monastic culture by patronising it, their descendants of the late eighth and ninth were increasingly prone to bend its economic and material assets to their own ends. There gradually evolved a new conception of minsters: places which kings and nobles could not merely support, control, bestow on their kin, or use for episodic hospitality, but actually annexe as sites of permanent residence.⁵³

Others have gone further, questioning whether there was any meaningful topographic, material, or social distinction between monastic centres and secular sites. They argue that the simplistic rigidity of 'monastery' versus 'palace' is unhelpful, and the reason we appear to have so few excavated royal centres is that many were indistinguishable from Anglo-Saxon monasteries in the sev-

⁴⁷ Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, pp. 84–91.

⁴⁸ Levison, *England and the Continent*, pp. 70–131.

⁴⁹ Williams, Shaw, and Denham, *Middle Saxon Palaces*.

⁵⁰ Carr and others, 'The Middle-Saxon Settlement'.

⁵¹ Loveluck, *Rural Settlement*, esp. pp. 144–47; see now Blair, 'Flixborough Revisited'.

⁵² Blair, 'Palaces or Minsters?', p. 121. See now Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, pp. 204–12, 281–85; Blair, 'Flixborough Revisited'.

⁵³ Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, p. 285.

enth and eighth centuries.⁵⁴ Even where surviving documents term something a 'monastery' or a 'secular site' we should be wary of uncritically accepting these rigid secular/religious definitions, not least because most documents were produced by the Church in the first place. Secular sites could become monasteries, and monasteries could accommodate secular residences, a changing character that is masked by fixed terminology.⁵⁵ Recent excavations at Lyminge (Kent)⁵⁶ and Bishopstone (Sussex)⁵⁷ have reinforced the consensus view that the 'monastic' or 'secular' character of settlements could change over time, which may also be paralleled at the Anglo-Saxon palaces at Cheddar and Old Windsor.

The articulation of Anglo-Saxon monasteries with royal residences is strongly analogous with Carolingian and Ottonian practice from the later eighth century onwards.⁵⁸ From the reign of Alfred the Great (871–99), which coincides with a period of close links between the Frankish and West Saxon dynasties and profound Carolingian influence on the Anglo-Saxon court,⁵⁹ we begin to see the construction of a class of specifically royal churches within these wider monastic complexes, churches whose architecture was drawn from Carolingian forms.

⁵⁴ Hines, 'Religion: The Limits of Knowledge', p. 391; Pestell, *Landscapes of Monastic Foundation*, pp. 59–63, 224. For the opposing view, see Cambridge and Rollason, 'The Pastoral Organisation of the Anglo-Saxon Church'.

⁵⁵ Pestell, *Landscapes of Monastic Foundation*, pp. 224–26.

⁵⁶ Ongoing excavations at the royal double monastery at Lyminge (Kent), founded in the first half of the seventh century, have uncovered an earlier royal complex on the site, including a substantial assembly hall and an unusually rich finds assemblage. In the late seventh century, settlement shifted adjacent to the monastic church, interpreted as the 'monasticization' of the existing royal complex. (Thomas, 'Bishopstone and Lyminge'; Thomas and Knox, 'A Window on Christianisation'). However, the site was still referred to as a 'court' (*cortem*) in 669, indicating the persistence of its royal associations (Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, no. 12; Blair, 'Lyminge').

⁵⁷ At Bishopstone, a later seventh-century monastery appears to have fallen out of use c. 900, by which time the site became an estate-centre focused around an extant tenth- or eleventh-century church (Thomas, *The Later Anglo-Saxon Settlement at Bishopstone*, esp. pp. 213–16).

⁵⁸ Brühl, 'The Town as a Political Centre', pp. 426–27; Garipzanov, *The Symbolic Language of Authority*, pp. 270–71; Innes, 'People, Places and Power', pp. 418–26; McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, pp. 157–71.

⁵⁹ Deshman, 'Kingship and Christology', esp. pp. 390–91; Nelson, 'King across the Sea'; Storey, 'Carolingian Connections'; Ortenberg, 'The King from Overseas'.



Figure 16.2. Plan of the Anglo-Saxon-defended landscape around the royal island of Athelney. Plan by the author, based on Aston, 'The Towns of Somerset', p. 183, and GSB Prospection, 'Geophysical Survey Report 2002/59: Athelney II, Somerset'.

King Alfred refounded a monastery on the fortified island of Athelney (Somerset) by 893 to mark his victory against the Vikings (Figure 16.2).⁶⁰ He constructed a chapel in a 'new architectural style' (*nouo edificandi*): 'four posts fixed in the ground hold up the whole fabric, and four apses surround it in a circle'.⁶¹ It is termed 'machinam', indicative of staged timber spires familiar from the Carolingian world.⁶² The four apses surrounding the chapel 'in a circle' imply that the central tower had an ambulatory, which has been suggested as analogous with the church of Germigny-des-Prés, near Orléans. This consisted of a square tower surrounded by an ambulatory with apses on three of its four sides, built *c.* 805 as a private chapel at the residence of a member of Charlemagne's court.⁶³ Athelney was refounded by Alfred as a statement of West Saxon royal adherence to Carolingian monastic life and was populated with monks from the Continent,⁶⁴ which supports the suggestion that Alfred's

⁶⁰ The foundation charter of Alfred's abbey records that the King granted land 'as a help to the monastic life of the monks there under a regular rule serving God devoutly', implying a pre-existing house (Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, no. 343; Bates, *Two Cartularies*, p. 127).

⁶¹ According to the early twelfth-century *Gesta pontificum Anglorum* of William of Malmesbury, chapter 92: 'Quattuor enim postes solo infixi totam suspendunt machinam quattuor cancellis opera sperico in circuitu ductis'.

⁶² Gem, 'Staged Timber Spires'.

⁶³ Clapham, *English Romanesque Architecture*, pp. 147–48.

⁶⁴ Hugo, 'Athelney Abbey', pp. 103–04; Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, p. 347.

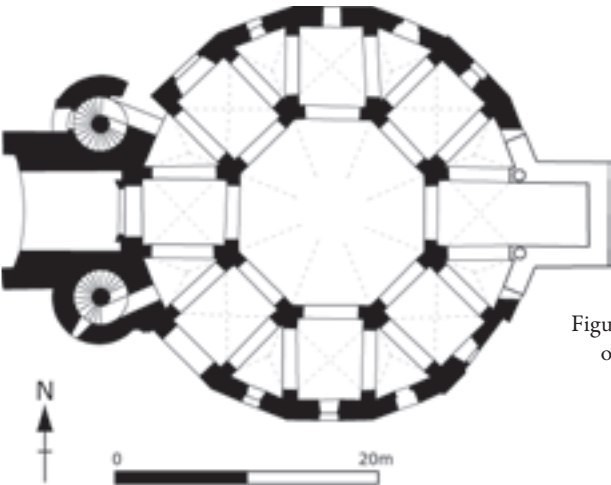


Figure 16.3. Plan and reconstruction of the imperial church at Aachen.
Plan by the author, based on Calkins, *Medieval Architecture*, p. 68; drawing by Antonio Reis, based on Bandmann, *Early Medieval Architecture*, p. 110.



chapel imitated the form of Carolingian palace chapels, whether Germigny-des-Prés or Aachen (Figure 16.3).

Athelney appears to have been a royal *vill* as well as a monastery. It was the location of an Iron Age fort, and its name *Æpelingaeigge*, first mentioned in 878, means 'island of the princes'.⁶⁵ Alfred refortified the island in 878 with a small force before gathering the lords of Somerset there to lead them against the Vikings.⁶⁶ The abbey's dedication to St Æthelwine, brother of the seventh-century King Cenwall of Wessex, is further evidence for a long-standing royal presence on the island,⁶⁷ and its interpretation as a fortified royal *vill* is supported by its location and topography, and the paucity of other creditable royal sites in the county.⁶⁸

The classic example of an Anglo-Saxon royal chapel within a larger complex of monastic churches is at Winchester (Hampshire), where King Edgar (959–75) commissioned a *westwerk* chapel adjacent to the existing seventh-century minster church.⁶⁹ Edgar's *westwerk* was a conceptually and liturgically distinct chapel within the larger church and is thought to have contained a throne from which the King could participate in services and display himself to the wider congregation (Figure 16.4). Circumstantial evidence indicates that Winchester's royal palace lay adjacent to both the Old Minster and the royal mortuary church at the nearby New Minster, which together formed the nucleus of the West Saxon royal capital where the *witan* met and the royal treasury was housed.⁷⁰ Compellingly, Edgar's *westwerk* chapel was almost certainly modelled on Charlemagne's palace church at Aachen (Figure 16.3).⁷¹

A royal church also architecturally analogous with Aachen was constructed by King Cnut (1016–35) at the monastery of Bury St Edmunds (Suffolk) to house the relics of St Edmund (d. 869), the last king of East Anglia.⁷² Bury St

⁶⁵ Ekwall, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names*, p. 18.

⁶⁶ Asser, 'Life of King Alfred', chapter 55; Aston, 'The Towns of Somerset', pp. 183–85. Geophysical survey has identified a series of linear ditches defending the western part of the island (GSB Prospection, 'Geophysical Survey Report 2002/59: Athelney II, Somerset', p. 2).

⁶⁷ Page, *The Victoria History of the County of Somerset*, pp. 99–103.

⁶⁸ Lavelle, 'Geographies of Power', pp. 202–03.

⁶⁹ Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle, 'Old Minster, St Swithun's Day 1093'.

⁷⁰ Biddle and Keene, 'Winchester in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries', pp. 307–08.

⁷¹ Biddle and Keene, 'Winchester in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries', pp. 307–08; Fernie, *The Architecture of the Anglo-Saxons*, pp. 100–101.

⁷² Gem and Keen, 'Late Anglo-Saxon Finds'.

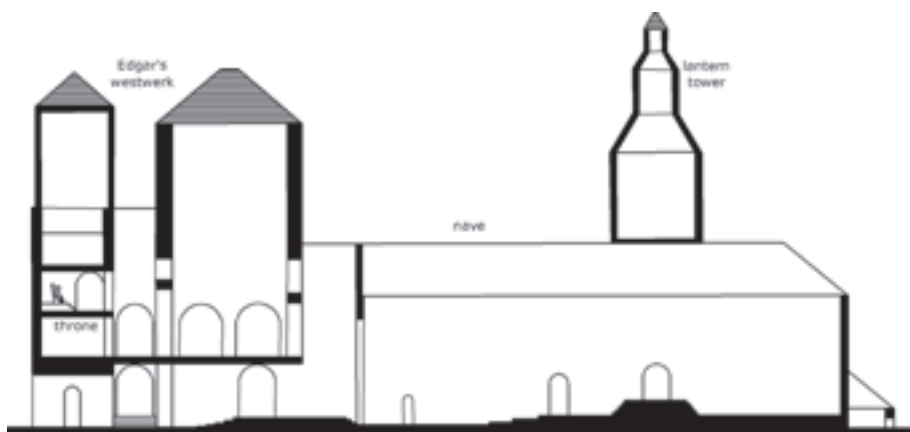


Figure 16.4. Reconstruction of the imperial *westwerk* at Winchester's Old Minster. Drawing by the author, based on Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle, 'Old Minster, St Swithun's Day 1093', p. 17.

Edmunds was reputedly founded *c.* 630 by King Sigeberht of East Anglia. It is referred to as a royal *vill* in the late tenth century,⁷³ and its mid-tenth-century place name *Beadurīcsword* implies the presence there of a hall (*word*) with exalted associations (as in the modern 'worth').⁷⁴

The final example considered here was established by King Eadred (946–55) at the abbey of Abingdon (Oxfordshire) (Map 16.2). The *De abbatibus Abbendoniae* describes it as 'a round chancel, a round nave twice the length of the chancel, and a round tower also'.⁷⁵ The *Abingdon Chronicle* suggests that the chancel directly abutted the tower with no intervening nave, meaning that the chapel was most likely a freestanding turriform structure, circular in plan, analogous to Athelney, Bury St Edmunds, and ultimately Aachen (Figure 16.3),⁷⁶ with which it probably shared a dedication.⁷⁷ The late tenth-century *Life* of

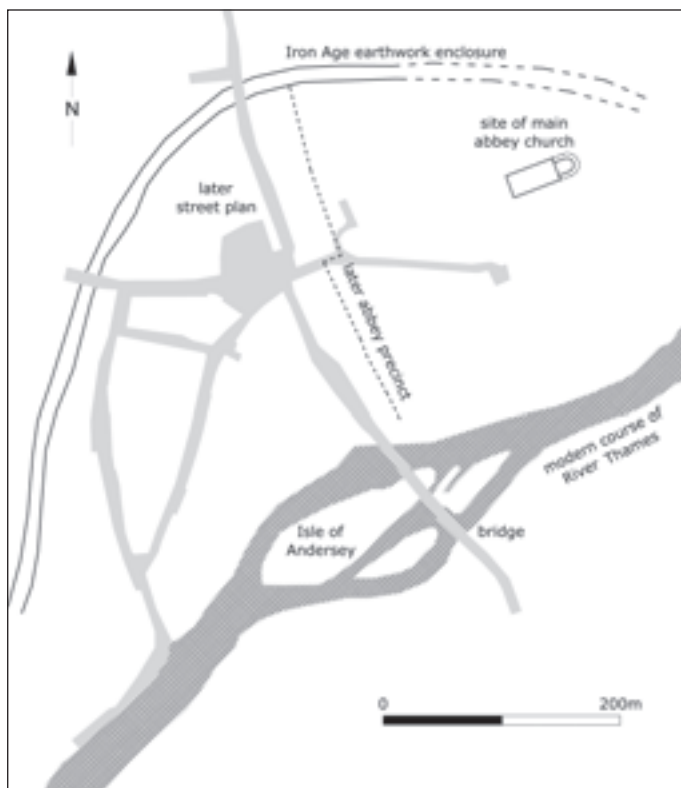
⁷³ Statham, 'The Medieval Town of Bury St Edmunds', p. 98.

⁷⁴ Ekwall, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names*, p. 78.

⁷⁵ 'Cancellus rotundus erat, ecclesia et rotunda, duplicem habens longitudinem quam cancellus: turris quoque rotunda erat': *Chronicon Monasterii de Abingdon*, pp. 277–78; trans. Fernie, *The Architecture of the Anglo-Saxons*, pp. 108–09. Written in the thirteenth century, *De abbatibus Abbendoniae* is now thought to contain a core of mid-twelfth-century or earlier information (*Historia Ecclesie Abbendonensis*, II, p. lvi).

⁷⁶ *Historia ecclesie Abbendonensis*, II, 28. For discussion of the chapel's form, see Gem, 'A Recession in English Architecture', pp. 8–9; Fernie, *The Architecture of the Anglo-Saxons*, pp. 108–09; Thacker, 'Æthelwold and Abingdon', p. 57.

⁷⁷ Gem, 'A Recession in English Architecture', p. 8.



Map 16.2.
Plan of early medieval
Abingdon. Plan by
the author, based on
Thomas, 'Monastic
Town Planning at
Abingdon'.

Bishop Æthelwold, under whose auspices the monastery was refounded and the chapel completed, contains a remarkable account of the King's involvement in the chapel's construction:

One day the king [Eadred] visited the monastery to oversee the building works in person. With his own hands he measured all the foundations of the monastery according to his plan for the erection of the walls.⁷⁸

After his death in 955, King Eadred granted Abingdon abbey to Æthelwold, later Bishop of Winchester, who refounded it along more strictly monastic lines. Hitherto, it had benefited from the wealth and patronage of kings Athelstan and Edmund and incorporated a royal residence: the *Life* of Æthelwold records that

⁷⁸ 'Venit ergo rex quadam die ad monasterium, ut aedificiorum structuram per se ipsum ordinaret; mensusque est omnia fundamenta monasterii propria manu, quemadmodum muros erigere deceuerat': *Vita Sancti Æthelwoldi* 12, in Lapidge and Winterbottom, *Wulfstan of Winchester*, pp. 22–23.

Eadred 'gave his royal estates in Abingdon, the hundred hides, with excellent buildings, to the abbot and the monks'.⁷⁹ King Eadred issued a charter in 950 'at the royal *vill* of Abingdon';⁸⁰ in a charter of 993, King Æthelred II mentions a 'royal building' on the 'estate called Abingdon';⁸¹ a 959 charter of King Eadwig states that kings no longer constructed royal buildings at Abingdon as in former times.⁸² It has also been suggested that the future King Edgar (b. 943) lived at Abingdon before he became King with the future Æthelwold as his tutor, to whom Edgar granted the estate in view of this service.⁸³ The monastery-cum-royal residence lay within the circuit of a fortified Iron Age enclosure which survived into the medieval period to delineate much of the abbey precinct (Map 16.2).⁸⁴

The fortified royal residence and monastery at Abingdon acted as a centre of royal power and authority in the regional landscape. It was the central place of three hundreds,⁸⁵ with a natural geographical unity which preserves the ancient royal territory of *Earmundesleah*.⁸⁶ The *Abingdon Chronicle* states that 'here was a royal seat, to this place people gathered when the important and difficult business of the realm was discussed':⁸⁷ the royal *witan* met there in 944.⁸⁸ Abingdon was also the location of an execution cemetery and a hundred meeting-place.⁸⁹ Hundred meeting-places hosted monthly gatherings of all folk

⁷⁹ 'Dedit etiam rex possessionem regale quam in Abbandonia possederat, hoc est centum cassatos, cum optimis aedificiis, abbati et fratribus' (*Vita Sancti Æthelwoldi* 11; Lapidge and Winterbottom, *Wulfstan of Winchester*, pp. 20–21).

⁸⁰ Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, no. 552 (Kelly, *The Charters of Abingdon Abbey*, no. 44).

⁸¹ Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, no. 876 (Kelly, *The Charters of Abingdon Abbey*, no. 124).

⁸² Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, no. 658 (Kelly, *The Charters of Abingdon Abbey*, no. 83).

⁸³ *Vita Sancti Æthelwoldi*, in Lapidge and Winterbottom, *Wulfstan of Winchester*, p. xlv.

⁸⁴ Allen, 'Abingdon Vineyard Redevelopment', p. 75; Thomas, 'Monastic Town Planning at Abingdon', pp. 51, 59.

⁸⁵ The Anglo-Saxon 'hundred' was theoretically a coherent geographical area of a hundred hides, a hide being sufficient land to support a farmstead, although there was considerable variation in practice. Ideally, each contained an estate centre, minster church, assembly place, and execution cemetery for its population (Reynolds, *Later Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 75–81).

⁸⁶ Biddle, Lambrick, and Myres, 'The Early History of Abingdon', p. 29; Thacker, 'Æthelwold and Abingdon'.

⁸⁷ *Historia ecclesie Abbendonensis*, I, 240.

⁸⁸ Stenton, *The Early History of the Abbey of Abingdon*, pp. 30–44.

⁸⁹ The execution cemetery lay c. 500 metres north of the abbey and has been tentatively dated to the Anglo-Saxon period (Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon Deviant Burial Customs*, p. 103). The assembly-site of Ock hundred was on the west side of Abingdon, at Ock Bridge (Gelling, *The Place-Names of Berkshire*, p. 400).

of consequence in a locality and were central to the governance of the Anglo-Saxon state.⁹⁰ Execution sites were potent symbols in the landscape of the judicial power of Anglo-Saxon kings and are known to have marked the boundaries of their kingdoms.⁹¹

Abingdon continued its close royal associations long after the refoundation of its monastery in 955. King Edgar was accustomed to hold feasts there,⁹² and lands belonging to the abbey continued to be used for the maintenance of royal sons.⁹³ The adjacent Isle of Andersey (Map 16.2) was part of this royal landscape. According to the thirteenth-century *De abbatibus Abbendoniae*, King Offa built a residence there which was succeeded by a hunting lodge belonging to his successor, King Coenwulf (796–821). Coenwulf's sisters retreated there to lead a holy life, and King Æthelstan I stayed there. A royal hunting lodge persisted on the island under William I.⁹⁴

Royal Churches and Social Power: Comparisons with Carolingian Practice

Carolingian royal chapels have been interpreted as more than convenient spaces for worship: they are argued to have had an active role in the power strategies of Charlemagne and his successors during a period of dramatic expansion of the Frankish Empire. Carolingian royal residences were religious centres to which bishops looked for guidance in matters of liturgy and doctrine, which in turn underpinned aspects of the Christian authority of kings.⁹⁵ The chapels at these residences formed a 'network of prayer' which helped the Frankish emperors bind together a vast and disparate empire through the propagation of standardized liturgy.⁹⁶

⁹⁰ See the ongoing research project 'Landscapes of Governance: Assembly Sites in England, Fifth to Eleventh Centuries' hosted by the Institute of Archaeology, University College London (Reynolds and Brookes, 'The Origins of Political Order').

⁹¹ Reynolds, *The Emergence of Anglo-Saxon Judicial Practice*.

⁹² *Historia Ecclesie Abbendonensis*, I, p. cviii.

⁹³ Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, no. 937 (Kelly, *The Charters of Abingdon Abbey*, no. 129).

⁹⁴ Lobel, *The Victoria History of the County of Oxford*, pp. 27–39; Thacker, 'Æthelwold and Abingdon', pp. 44–45. The accounts of Offa's palace and Coenwulf's hunting lodge should be not be accepted uncritically, however, since they are late interpolations into existing sources (*Historia Ecclesie Abbendonensis*, I, pp. cviii–cix).

⁹⁵ De Jong and Baggio-Huerre, 'Sacrum palatium et ecclesia'.

⁹⁶ McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, pp. 169–70, 340–45, and 379.

Charlemagne and his successors also used their palace chapels to help style themselves as the successors of Imperial Rome, lending legitimacy and cohesion to their parvenu empire. Charlemagne produced Roman-style coinage, his courtiers spoke Latin, assumed Roman names, and wore togas, and Aachen was chosen as the site for his palace due to its Roman origins and the presence there of thermal baths.⁹⁷ It was Charlemagne's effective capital from c. 795, and his semi-permanent residence from 801, but had been used as a royal residence from at least the 760s.⁹⁸ Charlemagne's church was his palatine chapel as well as the town's baptismal church,⁹⁹ and was modelled on the centrally planned rotunda church of San Vitale in Ravenna (built c. 527), the capital of the Western Roman Empire from AD 402 (see Figure 16.3).¹⁰⁰ San Vitale had in turn been directly copied from imperial chapels across the great capital cities of the Roman Empire.¹⁰¹ Charlemagne visited Ravenna as construction work at Aachen began, and acquired imperial porphyry and bronze statues for use in his new church so as to emphasize his imperial majesty.¹⁰² The imperial Roman iconography of Aachen's rotunda would be employed at numerous royal and episcopal palaces across Europe throughout the early Middle Ages.¹⁰³

Royal Churches and the Practice of Anglo-Saxon Kingship

The conversion of Anglo-Saxon England was inseparable from the dynastic struggles of its kingdoms.¹⁰⁴ No less than the rulers of the Carolingian Empire, the kings of Anglo-Saxon England appear to have used the churches at their residences — surveyed above — as instruments of royal power.

The suggested church and cemetery at Yeavering, attributed to King Oswald of Northumbria or his brother Oswiu,¹⁰⁵ was part of a complex of royal halls

⁹⁷ Nelson, 'Aachen as a Place of Power'; Carver, *Arguments in Stone*, p. 73.

⁹⁸ See Andreas Schaub and Tanja Kohlberger-Schaub's contribution to this volume.

⁹⁹ Nelson, 'Aachen as a Place of Power', p. 222; Lobbedey, 'Carolingian Royal Palaces', p. 137.

¹⁰⁰ Kleinbauer, 'Charlemagne's Palace Chapel'.

¹⁰¹ Surveyed in Calkins, *Medieval Architecture*, pp. 25–38.

¹⁰² Carver, *Arguments in Stone*, p. 73; Raff, 'Building Material', p. 67.

¹⁰³ Krauthimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, pp. 76–80, 318–20.

¹⁰⁴ Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 172–75; Higham, *The Convert Kings*.

¹⁰⁵ Hope-Taylor, *Yeavering*, pp. 276–77. For the dating of the site, see Cramp, 'The Making of Oswald's Northumbria', p. 28, and Frodsham and O'Brien, *Yeavering*.

aligned on a series of substantial timber posts placed in significant locations across the site.¹⁰⁶ These have been interpreted as pagan cult pillars of a type well known from various early English and north-west European written and pictorial sources.¹⁰⁷ The suggested church (see Figure 16.1) was constructed to replace one of these posts ('BX'), which stood upon an upstanding prehistoric barrow and was the focus of many pre-Christian burials.¹⁰⁸ This occurred following the destruction by fire of a suggested pagan temple (Building D2) at the other end of the site, which was associated with numerous burials, a stone circle, and another of the site's cult pillars.¹⁰⁹ The cessation of pagan cult activity at Yeavering was directly related by the excavator to the construction of the church and the incorporation of post BX into the northern boundary of the cemetery.¹¹⁰ Post BX was subsequently removed, the only one of Yeavering's great posts to be treated in this way.¹¹¹ Pagan cult posts of this type are thought to have been incorporated into Christian belief as analogues of the cross: their very word for 'cross' was *rōd*, 'rood, stick or post'.¹¹² Thus, the King's construction of the suggested church at Yeavering was both literally and metaphorically the replacement of the pagan sacred tree with the Christian cross.¹¹³ In this way, Oswald's reintroduction of Christianity into Bernicia is symbolized by this church at a key royal site.

St Peter's chapel at the royal residence of Bamburgh was constructed c. 643 by King Oswiu of Northumbria to house relics of his slain brother and predecessor Oswald, whose body had been dismembered and head and arms affixed to stakes. Oswiu took his brother's head to the church at Lindisfarne and his arms to Bamburgh.¹¹⁴ Oswiu's division of the King's body between several bur-

¹⁰⁶ Hope-Taylor, *Yeavering*, p. 193.

¹⁰⁷ Bintley, 'Trees and Woodland in Anglo-Saxon Culture'; essays in Bintley and Shapland, *Trees and Timber in the Anglo-Saxon World*.

¹⁰⁸ Hope-Taylor, *Yeavering*, pp. 72–78, 84–85.

¹⁰⁹ Hope-Taylor, *Yeavering*, pp. 97–103, 164–68.

¹¹⁰ Hope-Taylor, *Yeavering*, pp. 278–79.

¹¹¹ Bintley, 'Trees and Woodland in Anglo-Saxon Culture', p. 55.

¹¹² For the incorporation of sacred trees into Christian practice, see Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, pp. 374–83; Bintley, 'Trees and Woodland in Anglo-Saxon Culture'; Hooke, *Trees in Anglo-Saxon England*; essays in Bintley and Shapland, *Trees and Timber in the Anglo-Saxon World*. On the association of ritual posts with sacred trees, see Blair, 'Holy Beams'.

¹¹³ Bintley, 'Trees and Woodland in Anglo-Saxon Culture', pp. 51–56.

¹¹⁴ Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III, 6 and III, 12.

ial places was remarkable and highly unusual for the period,¹¹⁵ which indicates that his act had a special purpose. Oswald had been a remarkably successful king and overlord — the ‘Northumbrian Constantine’ — responsible for reuniting and re-Christianizing the Northumbrian kingdoms of Bernicia and Deira and extending their hegemony over much of northern Britain.¹¹⁶ Kingdoms in this period were not territories on a map but groups of people who shared a common identity with their king, his ancestors, and the ruling dynasty.¹¹⁷ The king *was* his kingdom; he was the keystone of his kingdom’s wider conquests, and these conquests frequently crumbled on his death.¹¹⁸ Oswald’s body retained the dead king’s power, perhaps due to his great death on the battlefield at the head of his army and the profundity of his sacrifice — almost passion — and dismemberment at the hands of the pagan king Penda.¹¹⁹ Oswiu was faced with rebuilding Oswald’s Christian *imperium*, so he drew upon the power manifested in Oswald’s body, placing part of the corpse at his kingdom’s cult centre at Lindisfarne and part at its power centre of Bamburgh. The chapel of St Peter was constructed as the setting for this royal statement of imperial intent.¹²⁰

Turning to the later sites, the striking thing about the royal churches at Abingdon, Athelney, Bury St Edmunds, and Winchester is their imitation of Carolingian forms, particularly Aachen, whose architecture was deeply imbued with the iconography of kingship (discussed above). By referencing these chapels at their palaces-cum-monasteries, Anglo-Saxon kings were not only projecting similar messages of authority and imperial pretension,¹²¹ but also furthering a number of power strategies. King Alfred built his chapel at Athelney to mark his momentous victory against the Vikings at the fortified palace-monastery

¹¹⁵ Thacker, ‘*Membra Disjecta*’, p. 101.

¹¹⁶ Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 86; Thacker, ‘*Membra Disjecta*’, pp. 107–08.

¹¹⁷ Dodgshon, *The European Past*, p. 135.

¹¹⁸ Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 159.

¹¹⁹ See Damon, ‘The King’s Fragmented Body’ for Oswald as a sacrificial martyr and intercessor for Northumbria with the divine.

¹²⁰ Oswald’s remains would be used on two further occasions to symbolize the dominion over a kingdom, at Bardney monastery in Lindsey after the Battle of the Trent in 679 and by the client-kings of Mercia at St Oswald’s priory in Gloucester in 909 (Rollason, *Saints and Relics*, p. 154; Thacker, ‘*Membra Disjecta*’, p. 120). Both cases bear remarkable parallels to Oswiu’s original use of Oswald’s divided corpse to manifest the resurgent power of his Kingdom of Northumbria.

¹²¹ Gem, ‘Towards an Iconography of Anglo-Saxon Architecture’, pp. 7–9.

from which his campaign was launched, a campaign which laid the foundations for the unification of England by the West Saxon royal dynasty. This culminated in the assumption of the title of Emperor of Britain by Alfred's great-grandson Edgar, who constructed his *westwerk* at his royal capital, just as Charlemagne had done at Aachen: Edgar's *westwerk* would similarly be used for the annual crown-wearing ceremony at Winchester, a fit stage for an important public demonstration of royal authority.¹²² Like Charlemagne, Edgar built his church as a focal place of ecclesiastical policies intended to unify a newly conquered empire and place the king at the centre of the church; like his new *westwerk*, Edgar's great Benedictine reform movement was directly modelled on Carolingian practice.¹²³ The Aachen-like rotunda at Bury St Edmunds can also be interpreted as an architectural statement of imperial triumph, built as Cnut the Great became master of an empire stretching across much of England and Scandinavia. His church was also a mausoleum to house the relics of the last king of East Anglia — who had been martyred by Cnut's pagan Viking forebears — indicating that it was also intended to conciliate the conquered kingdom of East Anglia and appease the English Church, a policy central to Cnut's legitimization of his reign.¹²⁴ At Abingdon, the parallel with Aachen is particularly striking in view of King Eadred's documented personal involvement in laying out the church, which suggests that he conceived its rotunda form. It was a royal chapel intended to stand alongside the site's ancient monastic church for the aggrandizement of the king, at what was not only a royal residence but a focal point of royal power and authority in the regional landscape.

Conclusions

There is surprisingly little firm evidence for Anglo-Saxon 'palace chapels', not least because our conception of a royal 'palace' as a permanent suite of ostentatious buildings is not generally applicable to the itinerant kings of this period. We have a limited amount of evidence for churches at Anglo-Saxon palaces

¹²² Hare, 'Kings, Crowns and Festivals', p. 48; Biddle and Keene, 'Winchester in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries', pp. 290, 308; Nelson, *Politics and Ritual*, p. 303.

¹²³ For an introduction to the tenth-century Reform, see Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, pp. 341–54.

¹²⁴ Gem, 'Towards an Iconography of Anglo-Saxon Architecture', pp. 7–9. Cnut promoted the cults of his Anglo-Saxon royal predecessors as part of his use of the Church to legitimize his reign: see Lawson, *Cnut: The Danes in England*, pp. 129–47.

from the seventh century onwards: during the late Anglo-Saxon period, a number of royal residences developed at monasteries, which tended to aggregate a number of churches of various dates and purposes, some of which were closely identified with kingship. The ninth and tenth centuries were a period of profound influence of Carolingian modes of power on Anglo-Saxon kings, and certain of these churches drew their architecture from Carolingian palace chapels, particularly Charlemagne's great church at Aachen. Abingdon, Athelney, Winchester, and Bury St Edmunds articulated monasteries with royal residences and power centres and were invested with the agency of their royal builders. As in the Carolingian world, these churches were arguably central to the maintenance of royal authority and the expression of imperial intent.¹²⁵ Throughout the entire Christian Anglo-Saxon period, therefore, the churches at Anglo-Saxon royal residences appear to have had an active role in strategies of royal power.

¹²⁵ See also Gian Pietro Brogiolo's contribution to this volume for royal power being represented in churches.

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHURCH IN ICELAND IN THE ELEVENTH AND TWELFTH CENTURIES, WITH REFERENCE TO THE REYKHOLT CHURCH

Guðrún Sveinbjarnardóttir*

Introduction

Iceland was first settled in the ninth century, largely by people coming from Norway via the Scottish Isles. The settlers were on the whole pagan, although some of them had already adopted the Christian faith. The formal decision to adopt Christianity was taken at the Icelandic Parliament, the *Althingi*, in the summer of AD 999 or 1000. All of this is related to us in the Book of Icelanders (*Íslendingabók*) and the Book of Settlements (*Landnámabók*), sources from the twelfth century and later that describe the initial settlement process.¹ The formal conversion was preceded by some missionary activity from Norway and seems to have been a remarkably smooth transition. The sources indicate that the decision was taken more to achieve political unity than for religious reasons.² Christianity symbolized the authority of the king, which in the case

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¹ ÍF, 1.

² ÍF, 1, pp. 14–17.

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of Iceland meant an association with the King of Norway. Some people had, as already mentioned, converted to the Christian faith, and unity within the country was regarded as safeguarding against external interference in domestic affairs. A practical aspect was that adopting the Christian faith would ease relationships with neighbouring countries,³ most of which had already converted to Christianity.⁴ Indications of the relaxed attitude towards the adoption of the new faith can, for example, be seen in the concessions that were given, such as allowing the exposure of unwanted infants and the consumption of horse meat, as well as sacrifices to the pagan gods as long as they were carried out in secret.⁵

The Development of the Icelandic Church

In the wake of the Conversion, a great number of small private chapels were erected all around the country. The initiative may have been taken by some of the chieftains, the *goðar*, and some of the better-off farmers, but it was certainly followed by many independent farmers who built chapels to ensure Christian resting places on their land. The churches of the chieftains eventually took the lead, offering churches large enough to house the neighbouring community and the regular services of a priest.⁶

The tithe was introduced in 1096, which was the equivalent of a 1 per cent property tax, making Iceland one of the first Nordic countries where the tithe was paid to the Church.⁷ It was divided into four equal parts. One quarter went to the bishop (the first bishopric was established at Skálholt in the south in 1056, followed by another one at Hólar in the north in 1106), one quarter went to the church, one to the priest, and one was collected by the district (*breppr*), which then distributed it to the paupers. That way the owner of the church, who either employed a priest or was one himself, received two parts, that is, half the tithe. Before the establishment of parishes with fixed boundaries, the church owner probably tried to increase his tithe income by erecting a larger church building and thus attracting more churchgoers and increasing

³ See Anne Nissen's contribution to this volume on the parallel case of the Christianization of southern Scandinavia.

⁴ Línal, 'Ísland og umheimurinn', p. 248.

⁵ ÍF, 1, p. 17.

⁶ Hugason, *Frumkristni og upphaf kirkju*, p. 213.

⁷ Hugason, *Frumkristni og upphaf kirkju*, p. 201.



Map 17.1.
Map of Iceland, with
the site of Reykholt
marked. Map by José
Carlos Sánchez-Pardo
using Demis WMS
World Map.

his tithe area.⁸ This is perhaps reflected in the larger church buildings that had appeared by the twelfth century. An example of such a site is Reykholt, which is the central focus of this article (Map 17.1).

The definition in medieval sources of a religious building in Iceland was based on whether it received the tithe or not. Those that did were called churches, and those that did not were referred to as chapels. Churches were divided into different types depending on how many services were given in them. At ‘full churches’, Mass was sung every Sunday as well as on official saints’ days. These churches also had priests attached to them and subsequently became parish churches. At ‘half churches’, there was Mass every other Sunday as well as on official saints’ days, and at ‘quarter churches’, Mass was held once every four weeks.⁹ In about 1200 there were at least 360 churches in Iceland with priests attached as well as some six monasteries, and more than one thousand lesser churches and chapels.¹⁰

⁸ Þorláksson, *Church Centres*, p. 15.

⁹ Guðmundsson, *Íslenskt samfélag og Rómakirkja*, pp. 185–88.

¹⁰ Vésteinsson, ‘The Formative Phase of the Icelandic Church’, p. 79.

The Development of 'Church Centres' in Early Medieval Iceland

By the twelfth century, some of the larger churches developed into what have been termed 'church centres' (Icelandic: *kirkjumiðstöð*).¹¹ These included farms with churches that had become ecclesiastical centres, or what in Icelandic were later called *staðir* (loci), and some other major churches.

The definition of a 'major church' (Icelandic: *meginkirkja*) varies among scholars, depending on how many attached priests, farms, and annex churches were considered as necessary for it to count as a major church. The higher the mark is set, the less dense the distribution map showing the location of these churches becomes. There may be some link between these churches and the chieftaincies (*goðorð*) in the medieval period, but there were also many others who established private churches: their number was considerably larger than that of the chieftaincies.¹² The large churches became an ever-increasing source of income for their owners and also served a cultural function as places where literature was created, no less so than the monasteries.

To become a *staður*, the church had to have acquired all of the land where it was located, or certainly the equivalent of more land than belonged to an average holding. It became a kind of self-governing unit under the authority of the bishops. There were probably many reasons for establishing ecclesiastical centres, and these are variously emphasized by different scholars. Jón Viðar Sigurðsson puts them down as being both financial and religious,¹³ while Orri Vésteinsson sees the principal reason as being a secular one,¹⁴ or to concentrate power and the struggle of the families of individual chieftains and major farmers for power. Helgi Þorláksson, on the other hand, proposes that joining hands with bishops to create centres that would support church activities and pastoral care was one of the objectives.¹⁵ The last proposition has parallels in other Scandinavian countries and also in France, where it is linked to the 'God's peace' movement that flourished from the end of the tenth until the eleventh century.¹⁶

¹¹ This discussion of church centres is largely based on Þorláksson, *Church Centres*, in particular Eyþórsson, 'History of the Icelandic Church'.

¹² Karlsson, *Goðamenning*, pp. 419–20.

¹³ Sigurðsson, *Chieftains and Power*, pp. 107–08.

¹⁴ Vésteinsson, *The Christianization*, pp. 128–29.

¹⁵ Þorláksson, *Gamlar götur og goðavald*, pp. 83–84. All these ideas are summarized in Eyþórsson, 'History of the Icelandic Church', pp. 40–49.

¹⁶ For an overview, see Paxton, 'History, Historians and the Peace of God'.

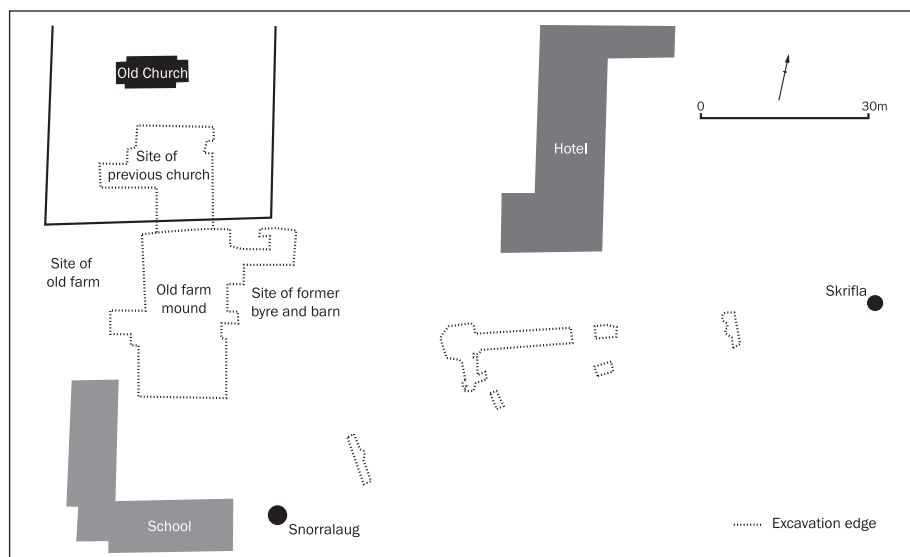


Figure 17.1. Site plan of the Reykholt excavations.

Source: Sveinbjarnardóttir, *Reykholt: Archaeological Investigations*, fig. 6.

These centres were then regarded as places of asylum.¹⁷ The suggestions mentioned above are based on the interpretation of medieval written sources rather than on evidence retrieved from archaeological investigations which are, so far, few in number. It remains to be seen to what extent such investigations can throw light on that issue.

The wealth of a church obviously played a part in establishing it as a church centre: the number of clerics serving it, the size of its ministry, the number of annex churches attached to it, and its proximity to main routes. One of the objectives of a workshop on church centres held in 2002,¹⁸ with participants from Iceland, England, Norway, and Sweden, was to explore whether the Icelandic church farms, the *staðir*, have parallels among churches established at an early date in other countries, often by kings, princes, or even bishops, such as the mother or major churches in continental Europe or the minsters in England.

There are similarities and contrasts with this comparative material. The two-stage development of the ‘minster hypothesis’ in England, where the initial seventh-/eighth-century foundation of powerful minsters was followed by the

¹⁷ Þorláksson, ‘Why Were the 12th Century *Staðir* Established?’, p. 155.

¹⁸ Þorláksson, *Church Centres*.

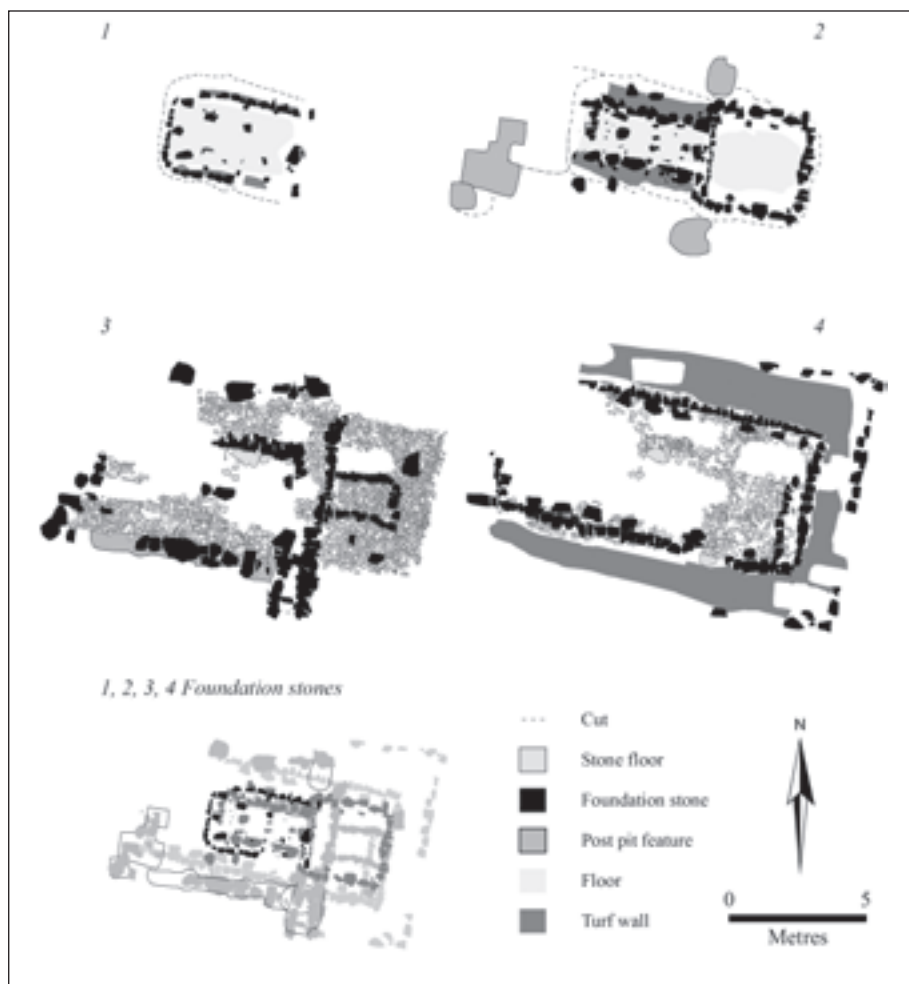


Figure 17.2. Preliminary plans of the main types of buildings excavated at the Reykholt church site and a composite plan of all four. Source: Sveinbjarnardóttir, 'The Reykholt Churches', fig. 1.

establishment of more local churches in the tenth–twelfth centuries, does not apply to Iceland, where all this development took place in one go in the twelfth century with the establishment of the *staðir*. On the other hand, the two-stage development did take place in Norway where head- and county-churches were established mostly on royal lands, preceding the foundation of churches of lower rank. This happened in a similar manner to England, but is regarded as being the result of a similarity in political and ecclesiastical conditions and needs in the two countries. But, as Haki Antonsson says, there is 'no denying

the profound role played by the Icelandic benefices, on the one hand, and the Anglo-Saxon minsters and thegnly churches, on the other, in consolidating and extending the power of secular lords over the localities'.¹⁹

The Reykholt Churches

One of the earliest sites to become a *staður*, probably in the early twelfth century, is Reykholt in western Iceland where extensive archaeological investigations have taken place in recent years (Map 17.1 and Figure 17.1).²⁰ The farm site excavation has produced dates indicating that the site was first occupied c. AD 1000.²¹ Written and archaeological evidence suggests that a church was erected not long after the introduction of Christianity in Iceland in about AD 1000,²² and it is still functioning with a resident priest. The site is best known for its thirteenth-century occupant, the writer and chieftain Snorri Sturluson. Snorri's best-known works are the *Prose Edda* and *Heimskringla*, which is a history of the Norwegian kings, and it was because of his historical importance that funding was secured for the archaeological investigations. The church at Reykholt was moved in the late 1880s, which freed the old church site for archaeological investigations. The area including the old church foundation was used as part of the cemetery until c. 1930, when the practice was stopped by the then-resident priest in order to preserve the archaeological remains.

The Archaeological Remains

Although some damage was caused to the church remains by the burials, the excavation at the church site proved to be very fruitful. Four main types of buildings were identified, one on top of the other (Figure 17.2), with the latter three types showing variations in design over time. A total of eight phases were established. The buildings have been dated on the basis of stratigraphy, datable objects, some ¹⁴C datings, and written sources to between the eleventh and nineteenth centuries. Processing of the excavation material is still in progress.

¹⁹ Antonsson, 'The Minsters', pp. 184–85.

²⁰ Sveinbjarnardóttir, *Reykholt: Archaeological Investigations*; Sveinbjarnardóttir and others, 'The Palaeoecology of a High Status Icelandic Farm'; Sveinbjarnardóttir, 'The Reykholt Churches'; Sveinbjarnardóttir, *The Reykholt Church Excavations*.

²¹ Sveinbjarnardóttir, *Reykholt: Archaeological Investigations*, pp. 48–51.

²² Sveinbjarnardóttir, *Reykholt: Archaeological Investigations*, p. 26. Sveinbjarnardóttir, 'The Reykholt Churches', p. 142.

This has already provided a more detailed differentiation in time of the variations in the buildings than is evident in the preliminary plans in Figure 17.2. The new and refined individual plans will be presented in the final publication. Below, only the Type 1 and 2 buildings are discussed.

The foundation of the earliest building (1 in Figure 17.2) served as part of the nave of the subsequent buildings. It was measured as being 4.5×2.57 m or 11.56 m^2 in size internally, but there were remnants of large circular post-holes at the east end that probably belong to this phase (the outlines of which are shown on the Type 2 plan in Figure 17.2), suggesting that it did extend further to the east. The nature of this extension is not known since it has been obliterated by the chancel, which was well defined during the later phases. The building was sunk by 1.2 m and thus constructed like a sunken-featured building or pit house, with the wall foundations made of stone and turf placed at the edges of the cut. Up against the walls at the sides small flat stones were placed at even intervals, probably supporting posts for wall panelling and/or to support a suspended floor and/or even a roof. No objects were discovered within the building, and there is nothing else to prove that this was a church. The interpretation of the Type 1 building as a church is largely based on the fact that it is orientated east–west and lies below the Type 2 church buildings which reused its foundation. The dating obtained for the Type 1 building is based on radiocarbon dates on birch from floor surfaces (SUERC-57017 and 57018 in Table 17.1) and its stratigraphic relation to the Type 2 buildings.

While it is now not possible to know how large the Type 1 building at Reykholt was originally, it is unlikely to have been among the smallest churches or chapels that have been excavated in Iceland and dated to the eleventh century. It is not clear whether it was unicameral, like some of those, or with a separate chancel. Examples of the former have, for example, been excavated at Hofstaðir, which was 4×4.3 m or 17.2 m^2 in size internally,²³ and Neðri Ás, which was 5.65×3.5 m or 19.77 m^2 in size,²⁴ both in the north of Iceland, whereas a chapel of the same date, with a narrower chancel, at Stöng in Þjórsárdalur in the south is *c.* 3.3×2.8 m with a *c.* 1.5×1.2 m chancel making it *c.* 11 m^2 in size internally.²⁵ None of these buildings were sunken.

The Type 1 building foundation at Reykholt was reused as part of the nave of the one replacing it, building Type 2. At this stage a well-defined chancel,

²³ Gestsdóttir, *Hofstaðir 2004*, p. 12.

²⁴ Vésteinsson, *Forn kirkja og grafreitir*, p. 16.

²⁵ Vilhjálmsson, 'Gård og kirke på Stöng i Þjórsárdalur', pp. 129–30.

which was also sunken to the same depth, was in place at the east end (2 in Figure 17.2). It also extended somewhat further to the west than building Type 1, making it a maximum of *c.* 12 m long. There were two phases for this church type, without and with the large posts at the corners of the nave shown in Figure 17.2. This is suggested by the discovery of badly preserved human bones beneath one of the post holes. Dating of enamel of a human tooth (SUERC-19830) gave estimates which suggest a twelfth-century interment. Similar results were obtained on charred birch (AAR-10751 and 10752) discovered in the lowest deposits within the nave of this building phase (Table 17.1).

Table 17.1. Radiocarbon dates from the Type 1 and 2 churches.

| Lab. No. | Material | Sample no. and context | Age (¹⁴ Cyr BP; 1σ) | cal AD2 σ |
|-------------|---------------|------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------|
| SUERC-57017 | birch | 2007-25-33H [2554] | 932±29 | 1028–1162 |
| SUERC-57018 | birch | 2007-25-25 [2549] | 998±29 | 990–1146* |
| SUERC-61649 | human tooth | RKH-06-25, 2448 | 1034±34 | 1010–1212 |
| AAR-10751 | charred birch | RKH-06-19i, 2464, 1 | 896±39 | 1030–1220 |
| AAR-10752 | charred birch | RKH-06-19i, 2464, 2 | 933±34 | 1020–1180 |

* An overall intercept range.

These are AMS dates. Calibrations are performed using OxCal v3-10: Bronk Ramsay, OxCal v. 3.10. Laboratory codes: SUERC: Scottish Universities Environmental Research Centre. AAR: Institut for Fysik og Astronomi, Aarhus Universitet.

The earlier phase of the Type 2 building, which had a chancel virtually the same width as the nave, does, in that sense, resemble a Norwegian stave church type which has been preserved in the Møre area in western Norway, although there was no sign of the characteristic diagonal posts placed outside the side walls.²⁶ This building tradition has been preserved in Iceland, for example in the church at Gröf in Höfðaströnd, northern Iceland, which has been rebuilt.²⁷ The main structural characteristics of this type are the use of intermediate posts in the long walls of the nave. Two post pads of an estimated five supporting such posts were preserved in each of the side walls in the Reykholt church. During its second phase, large post-holes were found marking each corner of the nave (2 in Figure 17.2). These will have formed part of the stave construction, making the nave *c.* 6 m wide, while the chancel was 3.5 m wide internally within the sunken area. Stone foundations running along the length of the nave divided

²⁶ Hauglid, *Norske stavkirker*.

²⁷ Ágústsson, *Skálholt*, p. 269.

it into three, creating an aisled building. The size of the post-holes marking the outside of the nave indicates that they housed large posts, which is again an indication of the high elevation of the building.

The twelfth-century date obtained from ¹⁴C datings for the Type 2 church is supported by the discovery in floor deposits of a number of objects, including fragments of a spouted pitcher of Stamford type dated to the first half of the twelfth century,²⁸ of a jug of Andenne type from Belgium dated to the twelfth or thirteenth century,²⁹ and of a metal comb and a penannular brooch with animal-head terminals, both of which can be dated to the twelfth or thirteenth century.³⁰ A quantity of window glass of medieval date which has been analysed as having its origins in France and Germany was also found in this church building.³¹ As well as providing additional dating for this church building, the imported items throw some light on its status at the time.

The archaeological evidence for twelfth-century churches in Iceland is so far limited. The closest example is the merchant church at Gásir in the north where three phases of the same church have been excavated, dated to the period between the twelfth and the fourteenth centuries.³² They are similar in size to the Type 2 churches at Reykholt and have large post foundation pits marking the corners of the nave, but are not sunken.

There are many more parallels to the later phase of the Type 2 church foundation at Reykholt in the wider North Atlantic area, not least in Norway where examples are at Holtålen in Trøndelag, Røkdal in Hardanger,³³ and Urnes in Sogn.³⁴ The oldest church at Sandur in the Faroe Islands is also of the same type,³⁵ as are medieval church foundations in Greenland,³⁶ although here no sunken corner post-holes have been identified. The Type 2 church, therefore, fits well into a North Atlantic context, except for its sunken nature. It is presumed to be the one that was erected at Reykholt when it had become an ecclesiastical centre in the early twelfth century.

²⁸ McCarthy and Brooks, *Medieval Pottery in Britain*, p. 256, no. 822.

²⁹ Borremans and Warginaire, *La Céramique d'Andenne*, p. 51 and fig. 21.1.

³⁰ Vilhjármsson, 'Kirkjukambur úr bronsi'; Eldjárn, *Kuml og haugfé*, pp. 374–75.

³¹ Curry, 'Fragile Luxuries'.

³² Vésteinsson, 'A Merchants' Church in Gásir'.

³³ Hauglid, *Norske stavkirker*, pp. 344, 363.

³⁴ Christie, 'Urnes stavkirkes forløper', figs 2 and 3.

³⁵ Krogh, 'Seks kirkjur heima á Sandi', p. 32.

³⁶ Krogh, 'Om Grønlands middelalderlige kirkebygninger', p. 300.

Discussion

The history of Reykholt and its success is closely linked to the chieftain Snorri Sturluson who, according to the contemporary written sources, enriched himself through his own marriages and those he arranged for other members of his family, not least during his time at Reykholt in the first half of the thirteenth century. But the site had already become a major farm and ecclesiastical centre (*staður*) before he took it as his main residence. It was occupied in the twelfth century and until the early thirteenth, when Snorri Sturluson took it over, by the chieftain (*goði*) Páll Sölvason, who was followed by his son Magnús, both of whom were priests as well as chieftains. The fact that the farm was already well off may, indeed, have been one of the reasons why Snorri considered making it his main residence. At the time he had control over another ecclesiastical centre close by (Staßholt) which was even richer than Reykholt.³⁷ So he does not seem to have been lacking in funds. A more likely reason for Snorri choosing Reykholt is the prestige the site enjoyed being an ecclesiastical centre overseen by a *goði*, and its location in the centre of his domain and at the juncture of major communication routes to the west, north-west, and south.³⁸ This is illustrated by an account in *Sturlunga saga*, a collection of sagas compiled in c. 1300 that is a rich source for the thirteenth century, where it is stated that Snorri held the wedding of his daughter in Reykholt rather than at his even wealthier second residence at the neighbouring farm Staßholt where he was residing at the time.³⁹

An additional attraction may have been the easy access to hot spring water, the source of which was to be found within the boundaries of the homeland. There is evidence of its use in the medieval period, from both the written sources and the archaeological remains. It is first mentioned in the twelfth- or thirteenth-century *Landnámabók*, which describes the ninth- and tenth-century settlement process in Iceland, as being used by the inhabitants of the neighbouring farm Breiðabólstaður which is the original farm in the valley according to *Landnámabók*,⁴⁰ and in *Sturlunga saga* there are references to Snorri sitting in his pool with his men.⁴¹ This prompts a comparison with

³⁷ DI, 1, pp. 178–80.

³⁸ Þorláksson, 'Icelandic Society and Reykholt'.

³⁹ SS, I, 302.

⁴⁰ ÍF, 1, pp. 192–93.

⁴¹ SS, I, 319.



Figure 17.3.
The warm pool at Snorralaug.
Photo by Gísli Gestsson,
Icelandic Museum of
Photography.

Emperor Charlemagne's choice of Aachen,⁴² where there was a source of natural hot water, as his home, the reason being that he suffered from arthritis.⁴³ Whether Snorri suffered from some ailment for which sitting in hot water was a cure is not known. The pool is still there (Figure 17.3), fed with hot water through a stone conduit from the hot spring which lies just over 100 m to the north-east. Further conduits of similar construction were found to run to the farm mound suggesting that the geothermal energy was also used there.⁴⁴ It has been suggested that the reason for the erection of a church at Reykholt lies in its closeness to this pool, which would have been an attraction for prospective churchgoers and thus generated income for the owner of the church.⁴⁵ This may also have contributed to the success of the farm and be one of the reasons why a farm was erected so close to what is thought to be the original farm in the valley.

⁴² On the case of Aachen church, see Andreas Schaub and Tanja Kohlberger-Schaub's essay in this volume.

⁴³ Steane, *The Archaeology of Power*, pp. 22–23.

⁴⁴ Sveinbjarnardóttir, 'The Use of Geothermal Resources at Reykholt'; Sveinbjarnardóttir, *Reykholt: Archaeological Investigations*, pp. 79–82.

⁴⁵ Vésteinsson, *Menningarminjar í Borgarfirði*, p. 19.

The earliest mention of a priest living at Reykholt may also be the naming of Þórður Sölvason as a resident at Reykholt in *Landnámabók*.⁴⁶ In a later source he is said to be a priest there.⁴⁷ To judge by the dating of the earliest occupation deposits discovered at the site, his father, Sölvi Þórðarson, could have been the first occupant at Reykholt while he himself may have been the one who erected the first church. The earliest preserved church charter for the Reykholt church dates to the first half of the twelfth century.⁴⁸ Through the church charters we find out how the church gradually amassed wealth by acquiring land and resources outside the homeland.⁴⁹ It is, indeed, the establishment and good management of the church which is thought to be the key to Reykholt becoming a major estate and an ecclesiastical centre.⁵⁰

Around 1200 the Reykholt church owned the homeland plus three neighbouring holdings to the north and south of it, including Breiðabólstaður. Topographical analysis has revealed that Reykholt, although the largest in area, does not contain most of the best type of farming land, namely the marshland, most of which lies at the mouth of the valley.⁵¹ The land rises inland, and the soils get thinner and less fertile. Reykholt lies in the middle of the valley, at the inland edge of which this change in the land begins to be noticed. Access to extra resources therefore seems to have been crucial for the prosperity of the farm.

Around 1200, these extra resources consisted of shieling or summer farm areas in at least two locations, fishing, woodland, and grazing rights,⁵² with the right to driftwood in the more distant West Fjords having been added by the fourteenth century.⁵³ The tradition of keeping sheep and cows at shielings over the summer in order to make use of extra grazing land was brought to Iceland by the settlers from their homeland.⁵⁴ Cheese and butter were made from the milk, and cloth from the wool, all of which were important trading items which could be exchanged for imported wares. The excavation of the church produced objects which were obviously imported, such as pottery from

⁴⁶ ÍF, 1, p. 78.

⁴⁷ ÍF, 7, p. 361.

⁴⁸ Gunnlaugsson, 'Carolingian and Proto-Gothic Script', p. 206.

⁴⁹ Gunnlaugsson, *Reykjahlótsmáldagi*.

⁵⁰ Eyþórsson, *Búskapur og rekstur*.

⁵¹ Sveinbjarnardóttir, Simpson, and Thomson, 'Land in Landscapes circum *Landnám*'.

⁵² DI, 1, pp. 279–80.

⁵³ DI, 3, pp. 122–23.

⁵⁴ Sveinbjarnardóttir, 'Shielings in Iceland', p. 74.

England, Germany, and the Netherlands, glass from France and Germany, and metal objects such as a fragment of a church bell which probably came from Germany.

Woodland was important as a source of fuel and for iron making, evidence for both of which was found during the excavation. The larger trunks of the indigenous birch could be used as building material, although most of this was either imported or obtained from driftwood. The church excavation showed that larch and pine had been used as building material.⁵⁵ Pine could have been imported from Norway, whereas larch would almost certainly have arrived in Iceland as driftwood, probably from Russia.⁵⁶ Access to both sources of wood was reserved for the better off.

The above summary of property and resources belonging to the Reykholt church in *c.* 1200 serves to show the prosperity of the site and its standing around the time it became an ecclesiastical centre.

Conclusion

Iceland did not have royalty when Christianity was introduced in *c.* AD 1000 to be in charge of the establishment of the earliest churches as did neighbouring countries. But it did have an upper class in the form of chieftains (*goðar*) as well as independent farmers of reasonable means, and it was left to them to erect private chapels on their farms and run them. It was obviously regarded as a sign of high status and prosperity to have and run a proprietary church. The introduction of the tithe in the late eleventh century facilitated the establishment and running of these churches, although the income generated would not have been enormous. Some of the church owners, like the one at Reykholt, prospered and had the opportunity to make money from running their churches. This is reflected in larger church buildings appearing at the better-off farm sites and the establishment of ecclesiastical centres at some of these sites. Access to extra resources in addition to the homeland seems to have been crucial in this respect. Although bishoprics were established soon after the Conversion, the bishops faced strong competition from secular leaders and did not become the more powerful party until much later. There is some evidence of a link between chieftaincies and the appearance of major churches around 1200, although the

⁵⁵ Guðmundsdóttir, 'Viðargreiningar á fornum við'.

⁵⁶ Eggertsson, 'Origins of Driftwood', p. 24.

extent to which the distribution of the two matches depends on the categories set for what constitutes a major church.

The picture that has emerged from the written sources of the development of Christianity in Iceland is gradually being supplemented with archaeological evidence. A handful of small chapels dated to the eleventh century has been excavated. Although the exact nature of the earliest building excavated at the old church site at Reykholt is uncertain because of fragmentary preservation, it was no doubt a religious building, the interpretation resting mainly on its east–west orientation and the fact that it was superseded by a church that was of larger dimensions built on top of it and reusing it in the twelfth century. The Type 1 building at Reykholt is different in construction to the chapels which have been investigated, and the fragmentary evidence suggests that it was a larger building than the chapels, perhaps reflecting the importance of the site from the outset.

The Reykholt church is the first parish church to be excavated in Iceland and the site that has provided archaeological evidence for the longest continuous development of one church building in the country. Comparative material is therefore scarce, and it is not yet possible to say how typical the buildings and the development of the churches at Reykholt are for comparable sites in the rest of the country. This can only be clarified with more investigations.

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